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WHILE I REMEMBER

STEPHEN McKENNA

By Stephen McKenna

WHILE I REMEMBER

THE SENSATIONALISTS
- PART ONE: LADY LILITH
- PART TWO: THE EDUCATION OF ERIC LANE
- PART THREE: THE SECRET VICTORY

SONIA MARRIED

SONIA

MIDAS AND SON

NINETY-SIX HOURS' LEAVE

THE SIXTH SENSE

SHEILA INTERVENES

New York: George H. Doran Company

WHILE I REMEMBER

BY

STEPHEN McKENNA

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"Two men I honour, and no third. First, the toilworn Craftsman that with earth-made Implement laboriously conquers the Earth, and makes her man's. Venerable to me is the hard Hand; crooked, coarse; wherein notwithstanding lies a cunning virtue, indefeasibly royal as of the Sceptre of this Planet. Venerable too is the rugged face, all weather-tanned, besoiled, with its rude intelligence; for it is the face of a Man living manlike. O, but the more venerable for thy rudeness, and even because we must pity as well as love thee! Hardly-entreated Brother! For us was thy back so bent, for us were thy straight limbs and fingers so deformed: thou wert our Conscript, on whom the lot fell, and fighting our battles wert so marred. For in thee too lay a god-created Form, but it was not to be unfolded; encrusted must it stand with the thick adhesions and defacements of Labour: and thy body, like thy soul, was not to know freedom. Yet toil on, toil on: *thou* art in thy duty, be out of it who may; thou toilest for the altogether indispensable, for daily bread.

"A second man I honour, and still more highly: Him who is seen toiling for the spiritually indispensable; not daily bread, but the bread of Life. Is not he too in his duty; endeavouring towards inward Harmony; revealing this, by act or by word, through all his outward endeavours, be they high or low? Highest of all, when his outward and his inward endeavour are one: when we can name him Artist; not earthly Craftsman only, but inspired Thinker, who with heaven-made Implement conquers Heaven for us! If the poor and humble toil that we have Food, must not the high and glorious toil for him in return, that he have Light, have Guidance, Freedom, Immortality? These two, in all their degrees, I honour: all else is chaff and dust, which let the wind blow whither it listeth."

THOMAS CARLYLE: *Sartor Resartus.*

PEOPLE who are old enough to write memoirs," says my friend Shane Leslie in *The End of a Chapter,* "have usually lost their memory." They have always, he might have added, lost the enthusiasm which once inspired and is alone able to explain their part in what they are trying to remember. Going farther, he might have challenged in words, as his book challenged by implication, the belief that there is any day in a man's life on which—though not an hour before—he is entitled to set down his reminiscences; yet one page from the journal of Alcibiades at twenty might well be more instructive than three volumes of the wisdom of Socrates at seventy.

My reason for writing the present book is that I wish to record certain impressions of a vanished generation while I remember them clearly and sympathetically; my excuse for publishing it is that the opinions and recollections of middle life are so seldom articulate. Reminiscences of childhood, where they survive undimmed, find their place in fiction and in autobiography; reminiscences of youth and manhood, collected and chastened from the sober angle of old age, are compressed into one patronising chapter of every standard life; but we are hardly ever allowed to look through the spectacles of thirty at the world as it appears to the eyes of thirty. Sometimes we are, indeed, admitted to the intimacy of a diary; but, if it has been composed with a view to publication, we may suspect that behind the pretext of

self-communing the author is striking an attitude; if it was never intended for publication, we may wonder whether it should ever have been published. Possibly there is still room for recollections that have frankly been written for publication before age has too greatly blurred the outline of memory or distance eliminated too ruthlessly the unimportant.

As the art of the novelist demands of him that he should first and foremost be a spectator of life, so the accident of race makes of him an involuntary critic if his lot be cast amid alien surroundings, however congenial; and the further accident of health not always robust may remove him a yet greater distance from the active life of his generation. In so far as this detachment gives him a separate standard of comparison, it may be not without value in the review of past manners and ideals.

It is with the life of that generation and not with gossip about this or that member of it that I am concerned. A new and inexcusable terror is added to social intercourse when the confidence, the indiscretion or the malice of a dinner-table is industriously recorded and published; and it is still believed by some who were trained in a tradition of reticence that intimate portraits and studies should be withheld so long as the originals or their friends can be offended or hurt by unsought publicity. While a man of even thirty-three, spending most of his life in London, may have met more than a few of the statesmen and financiers, the sailors and soldiers, the artists, authors and actors who have now chief place in the interest of their countrymen, I feel that it would be impudent for him publicly to scatter his unsolicited opinion on those whom he has been invited

to meet privately. This book will therefore be free from what has been called an "index of improper names."

It would be no less impudent for him to assume that anyone is interested in the insignificances of his private life. I venture to write of this epoch because I hope to present some aspects of it which might elude the historian who ranges over a wider field, preeminently the aspect from the standpoint of youth. Any autobiographical matter deserves no more honourable place than a footnote and is included only to explain how and why one super was found at certain times on a certain stage.

The generation which ended with the Peace of Versailles in 1919 is likely to be cut off from all that follows more completely than any of which we have record: a higher proportion of its youth has been destroyed, and of those who remain hardly one has been left in the place that he filled before the war; the standard and distribution of wealth have changed; and former lines of social demarcation have been obliterated. Though the old forms continue, the life that inspires them is new: the schools and universities, the learned professions and public services, the government itself are manned from a different class and actuated by different ideals. It may be not altogether wasted labour to sketch a corner of that old world as it was known to the men who were reared in time to be sacrificed in the late war.

Impelled by a common interest in changing fashions, Professor Sir Denison Ross, Mr. Hugo Rumbold and I once agreed to compile an encyclopædia of the catchwords and cant phrases, the popular songs and popular dances, the endearments and greetings of the last twenty years; though the work has not yet been begun, I am not without hope that there may be published in our life-

time a social survey of England which shall contain some few of the things commonly considered to be below the dignity of history, for the change in manners during the last generation is worthy of an exhaustive treatise; it is at once the effect and the cause of a corresponding change in morals; and, whatever progress the future have in store, those who first drew breath in Queen Victoria's reign may congratulate themselves, if it be a matter for congratulation, on having passed in thirty years from the civilisation of the Stone Age to that of the Cities of the Plain.

This book is as deliberately incomplete as the sketch-book of a traveller who records some few of the scenes that he most wishes to conjure up again and none that he would prefer to forget. Whether my reminiscences and reflections at thirty-three or at any other age are of interest to anyone I must leave my readers to determine, comforting myself with the thought that the years through which I have lived are themselves of interest and reminding those who regard memoir-writing as a prerogative of septuagenarians that in the life of most men there is a time when they are unable to look forward with confidence and must be deemed fortunate if they can look back without regret.

I have striven to avoid inaccuracy, but I have been compelled to write at a distance from all works of reference.

S. McK.

Talcahuano,
31 *January,* 1921.

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WHILE I REMEMBER

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CHAPTER I

WESTMINSTER

"A man, whom the fond imagination of his worshippers invested with the attributes of a god, gave his life for the life of the world; after infusing from his own body a fresh current of vital energy into the stagnant veins of nature, he was cut off from among the living before his failing strength should initiate a universal decay, and his place was taken by another who played, like all his predecessors, the ever-recurring drama of the divine resurrection and death. . . . The sceptic . . . will reduce Jesus of Nazareth to the level of a multitude of other victims of a barbarous superstition, and will see in him no more than a moral teacher, whom the fortunate accident of his execution invested with the crown, not merely of a martyr, but of a god. . . ."

J. G. Frazer: *The Golden Bough.*

I

ON the last Sunday of July, in the year 1906, Little Dean's Yard filled slowly with sixty or seventy boys in evening dress. All but about ten wore the black gown, which is one mark of the Westminster Scholar, and, over the gown, a white surplice open or buttoned according to the seniority of the wearer. It was not yet ten o'clock in the morning; but on Election Sunday all King's Scholars and Major Candidates appear in evening clothes, the Major Candidates distinguished by carnations of the prized Westminster pink which has been worn since the day, nearly a hundred

years ago, when the school rowed against Eton and settled that colour question by trial of strength: the victors were to have pink, the vanquished blue; and the deeper pink of Leander derives from the Westminster founders of the club.

These were the last few flying moments of the last scene. Six years ago the seniors in the swelling group, escaping from the thunder of traffic in Victoria Street and Broad Sanctuary, had entered the silent backwater of Little Dean's Yard as Minor Candidates; their parents or the masters of their preparatory schools led them under the arch and past the fives' courts; they turned shyly wondering eyes at Home Boarders, Rigaud's, Grant's, College and Ashburnham, at the Bursary and the head master's house; then they were shepherded through the Inigo Jones doorway and up the steps into School. It was the first day of the Challenge, wherein the candidates of other days met all-comers in a disputation—lasting a week or more—on the elements of learning and those who outlasted their opponents were elected to scholarships. Now, after six years, they were competing for the close scholarships and exhibitions at Christ Church and at Trinity, Cambridge. The written work was over; on Election Monday would come the *viva voce,* then the annual cricket match between the King's Scholars and the Town Boys on Vincent Square, then Election dinner in College Hall enlivened by the Greek, Latin and English epigrams which Westminster subsidises; then on Election Tuesday, still in evening dress, they would attend the school service in Abbey for the last time and for the last time answer *"Adsum"* at roll-call; the results of Election would be read out, the prizes distributed, the office-holders would divest themselves

of office and they would walk down School for the last time, into their houses, out of them again and into the world.

The Captain of the King's Scholars came out of College; the Head Town Boy joined him at the entrance to the cloisters; next to them were the other two School Monitors. The in-voluntary began; and the procession passed through the nave and under the organ loft: first the choir, then the Abbey clergy and the Dean of Westminster; the Dean of Christ Church and the Master of Trinity; the examiners from Oxford and Cambridge; the Head Master of Westminster; the assistant masters in gowns and hoods; the King's Scholars in surplices, gowns and evening dress, those of them who were leaving chastened by the thought that, after the Election Tuesday service two days later, they would enter the Abbey as members of the public only.

Westminster is so much the embodiment and shrine of English history that even the alien and the iconoclast cannot spend six years in the shadow of the Abbey without becoming steeped in the spirit and associations of the place. It is the influence of such foundations that makes of English life its present compromise between the rational and the traditional. From their places in the stalls could be seen the arches of the triforium which are filled at coronations by the Westminster Scholars: no king, they assert, can be duly crowned unless he is acclaimed by their triple shout of *"Vivat Rex"*. It is their privilege to be present in Palace Yard when the soveran opens Parliament; Scholars and Town Boys walk, of unchallenged right, into the gallery of the House of Commons, Scholars—in cap and gown—into the gallery of the House of Lords and, on Sundays, on

to the Terrace; when the Courts of Justice were at Westminster, they could wander unchecked into Westminster Hall. Their daily service takes place in the Poets' Corner; they are present at State funerals, their confirmation is held in Henry VII's chapel; and the whole Abbey is their heritage. Is not the school descended lineally from that group of lay scholars whom the monks of Westminster taught? Is not the monks' dormitory their Great School? Among the documents discovered of late years in the Abbey Muniment Room is a record, under the year 1284, of *expensæ,* being provision for the teaching of scholars, and a further record, under the year 1339, of payments for "Westminster School." Already old when Winchester and Eton were founded, with its roots struck deep in the Abbey's earliest history and with its life immemorially intertwined with the life of the Abbey, the two have remained side by side until Westminster is the last of the London schools to resist the pressure which has already urged younger rivals from their seats. Changing slowly with the slow unfolding of English history, the school was refounded by Queen Elizabeth on a secular footing; and the monitor of the week, kneeling with his back to Busby's birch-table[1] and facing the school, returns thanks *"pro fundatrice nostra Regina Elizabetha"* on the spot where Robert South prayed *"pro rege Carolo"* on the 30th of January, 1649. It retains, by the Act of Uniformity, its "almost unique privilege of using Latin in religious offices", though—as a concession to the Re-

[1] Once when Charles II visited Westminster, Busby, the head master, conducted him into school without uncovering: it would never do, he explained, for the boys to think that there was any one greater than himself. When the present king attended the pancake greeze, Dr. Gow related this story; the king at once commanded him to resume his cap.

formers—the monkish pronunciation was abandoned for that which was the universal English form until misguided empiricists set up confusion where none existed before by introducing a "modern" method.

Since that new Tower of Babel was erected, Westminster has watched other foundations arguing and striving to discover the correct pronunciation of classical Latin. Despite the periodical rebukes of its rivals, it has held stubbornly to its course, knowing that there is no sure means of recreating the speech of Cicero and that Westminster at least is too deeply bedded in the past to bend before each new breeze of educational fashion. A hundred customs are preserved to teach new generations that progress need not be divorced from the historic sense: when the bell rings for prayers at the end of afternoon school, a Second Election knocks with his cap at the doors of the form-rooms adjoining school and calls out, *"Instat quinta"*, or, on "plays" (half-holidays), *"Instat sesquiduodecima"*, although the actual hour is now nearly one o'clock; a Second Election has knocked thus since the time was told from a single clock and shouted through the school by a junior; before prayers begin, the doors are locked, and, when they are opened, one of the School Monitors[1] mounts guard outside to repel a chance raid by the "sci's"[2] of the neighbourhood who in less orderly days carried on a town-and-gown warfare against the school. At the lowest, such customs are a picturesque survival, like the Latin play acted in College Dormitory, the Pancake Greeze on Shrove Tuesday, the countless phrases

[1] *Mon. Stat.*, for *Monitor Stationis*.

[2] A contraction for *"Volsci"*, the enemies of the "Romans", *i.e.*, the Westminsters of many generations ago.

and customs which only a Westminster understands and which all Westminsters love; perhaps, too, they foster, in the alien and the iconoclast, a sense of the past. Abbey and School are a monument to continuity and ordered progress; in 1906, they were a monument at which the leaving seniors had been involuntarily staring for half a dozen years.

II

It is probable that few of them had much attention to spare for the sermon on that Election Sunday. At eighteen they had spent a third of their life at Westminster; it is a foundation in which son succeeds father and brother follows brother, as witness the carved and painted names of Madans and Waterfields, Goodenoughs and Phillimores up School, and on a September night of 1900 tradition had set them in the footsteps of their families and had sought a place for them in the old houses, there to serve and perhaps to suffer, to learn and, later, to rule.

"You will sometimes be punished when you do not deserve it", was the wise parting advice of one preparatory-school headmaster; "before giving vent to your indignation, reflect how much oftener you have deserved punishment without receiving it."

It is but fair to say that this consoling philosophy was little required at Westminster: provided that he incurred no suspicion of "side", there was so general a disposition to help the strange newcomer that he suffered little; and even his service was made easy for him. The "shadow", in Westminster language, was instructed

at once in the rules and customs of the house by a senior fag, his "substance", who shouldered his sins for the first fortnight and was theoretically liable to suffer vicariously for his shortcomings; after the days of grace a new boy could be fagged, though this involved little more than fetching and carrying, washing cups, filling saucepans and preparing call-over lists; he could also be "tanned", with an instrument appropriately designated a "pole"; but, though this was less agreeable, corporal punishment was not employed with undue frequency. There was always a right of appeal, too, with the menace of two extra strokes if the appeal was dismissed; but, as it was a point of honour never to appeal, the sufferer could only comfort himself with the thought that a tanning was over more quickly than "lines" or "drill" and with the hope that he might fall into weak or inexpert hands. Of bullying there was little; of systematic oppression and torture of the weak by the strong there was none at all, though the small boys of that generation (as of every other) believed that, if a companion was offensive, their right and duty impelled them to drum the offensiveness out of him.

The war has caused the English people to examine searchingly its scheme of education and especially that public-school system which trains the sons of the well-to-do for future eminence in government, the public services and the learned professions. There have been many books and much discussion: the English love of finding fault with cherished institutions while approving the result has led to a hazy belief that the English public-schoolboy is the finest raw material in the world, but that only his inborn superiority has saved him from destruction by a burthen of useless learning, devastating

ignorance, insane athleticism and vicious associations. It is more than time to suggest that his excellence is a delicate bloom nurtured and saved by the public school from the criminal neglect of his parents and that most critics, failing to distinguish between the phases through which every boy passes, have written down as chronic disease what was but temporary green-sickness.

Few men can speak with knowledge of more than one school, but there is little risk in the assertion that the natural history of the public-schoolboy is broadly the same at all times and places. Withdrawn at an early age from the dry-nursing of his natural guardians, he is flung into a vast adolescent society and left to struggle through as best he may: his parents commonly escape the embarrassment of explaining to him the elements of physiology, preferring that he should learn them from the gloating confidences of other boys hardly less ignorant than himself. Native chastity of soul keeps some unsmirched, but most go through an ugly period of foul tongues, foul minds and sometimes foul propensities which the school seeks to circumvent by vigilance and hard physical discipline. During the middle phase, this blind, misunderstood groping towards maturity comes to be gradually controlled; and, in the last, the adult boy is seen as a clean-living, clean-speaking, rather solemn blend of scholar, sportsman and despot, very conscious of his responsibilities and zealous to repress the primitive exuberance by which he himself was afflicted two or three years earlier.

Before public schools are denounced for making boys licentious of habit and obscene of tongue, parents might ask themselves what preventive measures they themselves have taken. And, before any one attacks the in-

sistence on athletics in public schools, he might ask himself what better physical discipline he can propose and whether this derided love of sport is inculcated at school or at home. If a boy were not compelled by fear of punishment to take part in games, he would be coerced by the opinion of parents who would not understand nor tolerate a son without the Englishman's normal and natural preoccupation with sport; and, though compulsory games are easy to ridicule, they do not kill the chivalry of good sportsmanship: an early Westminster memory is of a football shield passing, after long and honourable contest, from one house to another; while the head and captain of the winning house fetched away the trophy, the losing house lined up to cheer their victors and, if possible, to drown the cheers of the winning house for the one that had lost.

A defence of the public-school system would deserve at least as much space as the critics have given to attacking it. This is neither the place nor time to engage in the endless controversy; it was not the place nor time, fifteen years ago, for any who sat thinking of their own school and of the days that they had spent there.

III

Many of those who were leaving must have wondered where the outgoing draft would be in another six years' time. Westminster contains about three hundred boys, drawn chiefly from the professional classes, and in turn sends a steady stream of recruits to the civil service and the learned professions. Barristers and doctors abound; government servants are to be discovered richly dis-

tributed through Whitehall, India and the colonies; the school has its share of clergymen and more than its share of soldiers. In less than six years all would have come down from Oxford and Cambridge, unless any had had the good fortune to secure a fellowship; and, while those who were destined for a profession had already decided on their careers, those who dreamed of public life and looked, perhaps, towards the north transept where, in white marble and late-won peace, Beaconsfield and Gladstone stood side by side, may have preferred to keep locked in their own hearts the ideals which they had diffidently set before themselves.

The changing and strengthening aspirations of a boy have won as little space in all the crop of analytical school literature as have the vagaries of his religious faith or the evolution of his civic morals. The Victorians, indeed, in strict accordance with formula, loaded their hero with vague disquiet which was only relieved when he recalled that he had ceased to receive the sacraments; a later generation arrested him in full flight to perdition by intervening opportunely with a soul-steadying preparation for confirmation; the Catholic propagandists habitually threw a sympathetic priest across his path in the course of a holiday ramble; and, if there be a school literature of dissent, I doubt not but that some harassed hero found peace in the practice of Congregationalism. It was recognised, therefore, that the faith of childhood is not infrequently discarded at school; it was assumed with less justification that boys undergo spiritual distress at such a time; and, as the hero of a novel is not expected to suffer as long or as acutely as any one in life, one or other of the conventional escapes could always be chosen. It is hard to remem-

ber a book in which the hero sheds his belief in supernatural religion as lightheartedly as once he outgrew his faith in Santa Claus; and, even if it be assumed from private knowledge and experience that many schoolboy heroes have passed through this spiritual transformation, it is harder to recall even one who has been described as constructing a new system to take the place of that which has been overthrown.

This reconstruction, nevertheless, was being attempted twenty years ago, in the aftermath of the higher criticism, by all boys with a speculative bent of mind; they were distinguished from their predecessors by inherited scepticism; and their natural history, to venture once more on a generalization from admittedly incomplete data, was roughly the same everywhere in England. Were it reasonable to fancy for a moment that modern boys were distressed when their faith left them, severe blame would attach to the timorous, indolent or dishonest parents who shirk the burden of explaining and who teach as truth what they themselves believe to be untrue, hoping that, when their children are older, they will somehow have learned better at the hands of masters, who are debarred from religious controversy, or of boys, who can only contribute an equal ignorance. In fact, the boy who lost his faith in revealed religion lost it more slowly, but no whit more painfully than his belief in fairies; he no longer wrote to his fellows, as Gladstone and Manning would write, to discuss the state of his soul; he sought no spiritual director and asked no one to pray for him, though he may have wondered why his parents preserved a grotesque imposture for so long. In reading and in discussion he had absorbed ideas of biological evolution, of geological testimony and of reli-

gion studied comparatively; he applied to historical Christianity the tests which he had been taught to use on the history of Greece and Rome, accepting nothing that could not be proved by evidence and rejecting the pretensions of faith as he rejected the statements of a secular historian that his history was literally inspired. Already he had heard that the Old Testament was no longer accepted as heretofore; he may even have learned that, for thousands of years before Christ, countless gods were sacrificed annually by crucifixion or other means and that a Barabbas was annually released to the people; the distillation continued until he was left with the residuum that a man named Jesus Christ, claiming or having claimed for him a divine fatherhood, was crucified after a short life of healing and teaching; there were, he found, no independent contemporary documents, and the fullest accounts, written many years after the events they described, were inspired by the devotion of his followers, whose critical judgement, however, was on a level of education to be expected in one harassed and turbulent corner of the Roman Empire.

The concluding passage from *The Golden Bough,* of which a few words have been quoted at the beginning of this chapter, defines, in prose of rare beauty, the attitude of an agnostic towards Christianity. "A man," wrote Sir James Frazer, "whom the fond imagination of his worshippers invested with the attributes of a god, gave his life for the life of the world; after infusing from his own body a fresh current of vital energy into the stagnant veins of nature, he was cut off from among the living before his failing strength should initiate a universal decay, and his place was taken by another who played, like all his predecessors, the ever-recurring

drama of the divine resurrection and death. . . . It was played in Babylonia, and from Babylonia the returning captives brought it to Judæa, where it was acted, rather as an historical than a mythical piece, by players who, having to die in grim earnest on a cross or gallows, were naturally drawn rather from the gaol than the green-room. A chain of causes which, because we cannot follow them, might in the loose language of daily life be called an accident, determined that the part of the dying god in this annual play should be thrust upon Jesus of Nazareth, whom the enemies he had made in high places by his outspoken strictures were resolved to put out of the way. They succeeded in ridding themselves of the popular and troublesome preacher; but the very step by which they fancied they had simultaneously stamped out his revolutionary doctrines contributed more than anything else they could have done to scatter them broadcast not only over Judæa but over Asia; for it impressed upon what had been hitherto mainly an ethical mission the character of a divine revelation culminating in the passion and death of the incarnate Son of a heavenly Father. In this form the story of the life and death of Jesus exerted an influence which it could never have had if the great teacher had died, as is commonly supposed, the death of a vulgar malefactor. It shed round the cross on Calvary a halo of divinity which multitudes saw and worshipped afar off; the blow struck on Golgotha set a thousand expectant strings vibrating in unison wherever men had heard the old, old story of the dying and risen god. Every year, as another spring bloomed and another autumn faded across the earth, the field had been ploughed and sown and borne fruit of a kind till it received that

seed which was destined to spring up and overshadow the world. In the great army of martyrs who in many ages and in many lands, not in Asia only, have died a cruel death in the character of gods, the devout Christian will doubtless discern types and forerunners of the coming Saviour—stars that heralded in the morning sky the advent of the Sun of Righteousness —earthen vessels wherein it pleased the divine wisdom to set before hungering souls the bread of heaven. The sceptic, on the other hand, with equal confidence, will reduce Jesus of Nazareth to the level of a multitude of other victims of a barbarous superstition, and will see in him no more than a moral teacher whom the fortunate accident of his execution invested with the crown, not merely of a martyr, but of a god. The divergence between these views is wide and deep. Which of them is the truer and will in the end prevail? Time will decide the question of prevalence, if not of truth. Yet we would fain believe that in this and in all things the old maxim will hold good—*Magna est veritas et prævalebit.*"

The sceptics of the last Victorian decade left school as agnostics; of their number, the more reflective set themselves to fill the vacuum. As a boy, with a prospect of life too long to measure, has an equal distaste for the sentimentality of heaven and for the melodrama of hell, he probably concerned himself little with the condition that he could only attain eternal life by believing in the divinity of Christ. Scepticism may have forced him to doubt whether eternity was intelligible and to be certain that it was undesirable; but his knowledge of history and his taste for speculative enquiry suggested that eternity in another existence might be less important than the conditions on which his present

existence was carried on: the ethics of Christianity were more valuable, in his eyes, than its dogma.

It is here that the reconstruction commonly began, with the question: "If there be no God, no eternal life, no reward for virtue, nor punishment for evil, why should any one strive after godliness? The policeman, indeed, watches for a breach of the civil law, but only a fool would clothe the naked or feed the hungry without thought of reward. Hitherto this was said to be 'right', 'charitable', 'kind'; but why *should* any one be kind or charitable?"

The answer of history was that every member of every community gained in security and comfort by the comfort and security of the community and that none was tolerable in which fear and injustice, want and cruelty were permitted; in his own interest every man must strive to eradicate them, for the other members were his daily neighbours. Side by side with the teaching of the biologists, who destroyed with their theory of evolution the belief in a special creation, there came into the common stock of ideas the teaching of the utilitarians, who offered a new criterion for private and public conduct. While Christian dogma might be an obsolete short cut to an eternity which few desired and fewer still could contemplate, Christian ethics remained the noblest and gentlest counsel to perfection. At length reconstruction found itself back at the injunction that a man should love his neighbour as himself.

Each with his own formula, the young agnostics of the last generation worked by discussion, reading and reflection to a new imperative; and those who found satisfaction in Christian ethics as a guide to conduct found

also that the Christianity which they had fashioned for themselves was a militant faith. Injustice and fear, suffering and cruelty are not to be eradicated by private renunciations and protests; those who care enough for beauty to wish the world beautiful have to make the world beautiful. And the machine in which the form of the world is changed seemed in those days to be politics.[1]

Vast as had been the progress of recorded history, vaster progress remained to be accomplished if civilisation was not to be judged an hypocrisy or a failure; and, though the saddest limitation of youth be its utter misunderstanding of the obstacles in the way of any change, its most glorious endowment is surely its impulsive desire to realise its ideals. Impatient of muddle, intolerant of laziness, sensitive to beauty and fiercely sympathetic with suffering, youth glances with disgust at the meanness and squalor that desecrate every part of its world and offers the generous ardour of a world-builder to set it right. Childhood with its wooden blocks and sand-castles, boyhood with its tools and engines, youth with its instruments and diagrams are the constructive times of life: there is little that lusty youth will not make, nothing that impatient youth is afraid to reform; its heroes are the great conquerors and builders who tidied some corner of a dilapidated world, the explorers who sought new worlds to tidy, even the prophets and lawyers who tried to bring uniformity into religion and society.

[1] In such histories of intellectual development as I have read, attention is paid to the dates at which certain copyrights have the other dates at which "popular editions" have been issued. Cheap ing, often aided by this new freedom to print, made available to the of my generation a vast literature of history, biology, politics, econom and theology. Darwin, Huxley, J. S. Mill and Carlyle were but a few those who lay at our disposal.

In a thousand hours of meditation or wrangling the boys of that generation hammered out each his own formula of political change. The ethics of private property and communism, of war and peace, of equal democracy and paternal despotism, of the national ideal and the ideal of internationalism were argued at school from the standpoint which had been taken up at home and at home from a standpoint which had been startlingly occupied at school. Whatever had been the inherited preconceptions, every political doctrine was now required to justify itself: the party which had enjoyed almost unbroken tenure of office for nearly a fifth of a century fell from power in 1905, to be succeeded by one which brought up for settlement or readjustment all the old problems of domestic controversy and many that were new.

IV

It is easy to guess the political path chosen by an Irish boy brought up in England and sent to a tory stronghold by a father who had reared him on the pure milk of late-Victorian radicalism; it is not difficult to imagine what lions beset that path. The way of the minority politician in a public school is hard but stimulating: while the Boer war continued, any doubts of British wisdom or justice in South Africa were ill-received and answered by violence; for two years more, since free trade had been abandoned by Mr. Chamberlain, a solitary free-trader would be beaten to his knees by phrases about dying industries, dumping and unfair competition; and, all the while, there was little chance of agreement between those who would have solved the Irish

difficulty by holding Ireland under the sea for five minutes and any one who was never able to forget the sailing of crowded emigrant ships from Queenstown and the keening which rose to Heaven in acknowledgment of British rule.

Only in the dignified atmosphere of the Debating Society, when a general election had sent hundreds of radicals to Parliament and proved that radicals existed, in hundreds of thousands, outside it, did radical policy get a hearing. Political interest revived sharply in 1905 and 1906: more than ever did the rising politicians use their privilege of attending debates in the House of Commons. It has been said that politics are made tolerable in England by the fact that hardly any one takes them seriously except the politicians, who are for the most part not English; but they are dangerous food for the young in the expectations that they arouse and in the disillusionment that they entail. After nearly twenty years of tory rule, the liberals in 1905 were healed of their long domestic dissensions and assured of a majority; the ministry so judiciously chosen by Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman was overwhelming in its varied strength; with the pacification of South Africa and the repatriation of the indentured Chinese labourers, the dark infamy of the Boer war and of a calamitous plunge into Rand politics were to be forgotten; social reform was sketched with a bold hand; a message of peace and goodwill was sent to the other powers.

So vast was the ministerial majority after the election of 1906 that a liberal prime minister, for the first time since 1880, seemed able to fulfil his promises without having to balance the claims of ill-assorted groups or to

consider the vague menace of the House of Lords; the ambitions of the Liberal League had been defeated, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman had survived the efforts of his more spirited colleagues to kick him upstairs. In 1906, for those who cared to see the world beautiful and would spend their ardour to make it beautiful, there was still a sufficient part of the population illiterate, hungry and diseased, rendered miserable by fear and savage by injustice to keep the social reformers employed; Ireland, Egypt and India all demanded a change of administrative system. Those were days in which it seemed good to be a liberal.

V

It would have been a meagre tribute to the spell of Westminster if some of those who, in passing out of Abbey on that last Sunday of Election Term, passed also out of their pupilage, did not look forward from the threshold of manhood in a spirit of dedication; it would have been an admission of dubious gratitude if, in bidding farewell that afternoon under the trees of College Garden, they had not confessed their debt to the school. In six years some few of them had developed into fair scholars along lines of education which had not then been so bitterly attacked as they have been since: no one, indeed, aimed to make them proficient in preparing a manifest and detecting an escape of sewer gas; in their curriculum the financial possibilities of Spanish and Russian were ignored, like all other adjuncts to a sound commercial training; and, though the art of Asia and the letters of Ethiopia have since

been urged as an alternative to Greek and Latin, they stuck insularly to the literature and history of the civilisation from which all the great modern civilisations of Europe derive. Those who cared to work contrived to cover a wide field even in that English literature which is popularly thought to be excluded from public-school study; for the rest, it should be recognised that a point is quickly reached at which those who do not wish to work can no longer be compelled. At the lowest computation, all had received at least a grounding in the humanities and an equipment for profounder study of subjects that by pressure of time could not be exhausted at school.

In addition, they were for five or six years disciplined to a system, yielding obedience as unquestioningly as afterwards they exacted it.

"This we learned from famous men,
Knowing not its uses,
When they showed, in daily work,
Man must finish off his work—
Right or wrong, his daily work—
And without excuses. . . .

This we learned from famous men
Teaching in our borders,
Who declared it was best,
Safest, easiest, and best—
Expeditious, wise and best—
To obey your orders.

Some beneath the further stars
Bear the greater burden:
Set to serve the lands they rule,
(Save he serve no man may rule),
Serve and love the lands they rule;
Seeking praise nor guerdon. . . ."

They learned initiative and responsibility; they were trained to subordinate the individual to the community; and they acquired a code which at its worst was limited and foolish, at its best exalted and honourable. If the panorama of a public school has its ugly patches, so has the panorama of life; if the prejudices were many, they were fewer than the prejudices encountered on leaving school; if the honour was circumscribed, its boundaries were reached perhaps less quickly than the boundaries of honour in later life. The convention that there is at best an armed neutrality between boy and master leads the boy to a diplomatic economy of truth not always distinguishable from disingenuousness; in his dealings with seniors, contemporaries and juniors he is honest, truthful and substantially just. As he is taught to accept undeserved punishment without complaining, so he learns to avow the undetected misdeeds by which a fellow might suffer; never to fail the team, the house, the school or a single friend, always to hide emotion and to be in hard physical condition may be crude social ethics, but they are neither unworthy nor fruitless in their effect on public life. Twenty years ago it would have been unnecessary to put forward these claims, but the querulous aftermath of the war has involved the public schools in ill-defined suspicion; yet the leader of a crusade would find no more ardent, generous and upright spirits than in old British public-schoolboys of seventeen to twenty-two; and, before the worldling discharges his gibes at their honour and their code, he might stay to reflect whether the administration of empire, as carried out in two hemispheres by the sons of these long-suffering schools, must yield pride of place, for integrity and devotion, to the public services

of Germany and France, Italy and Spain, America and Japan, whether, too, the scandals and treacheries which have broken the monotony of English public life in the last ten years are due to excess of these derided qualities or to want of them.

If, on the last Sunday, many lacked the detachment to set out in detail their debt to Westminster, all could acknowledge their love and treasure their last moments. Next morning the Major Candidates were imprisoned in a form-room leading to School and summoned one by one to stand before a long table for the *viva voce* examination. There followed the match between the King's Scholars and the Town Boys. Next morning those who were leaving rose and for the last time put on dress clothes and a gown for their last day at Westminster.

After the breaking-up service in the Abbey, they assembled in School for call-over. The results of Election and the removes were read out, the prizes distributed, the prize epigrams recited by their authors and rewarded with one of the silver pennies that come to Westminster in the distribution of the Maundy. Armed with a birch ("rod"), one of the School Monitors was despatched down the gangway between the lower forms to find and escort to the head master's dais a young offender who paid for his too frequent presence in penal drill by being publicly flicked across the back of the hand. Then the Captain and three School Monitors stood up and in turn were handed the birch which they reversed and gave back to the head master; as soon as they had been discharged of their dignity and duties, the new School Monitors were handed the birch in token of office. At the *"Oremus"* the new Captain knelt facing

the school and read the Latin prayers; with the *"Ire licet"* was born a new generation of Old Westminsters.

In an interview with the Dean of Christ Church, those who had been elected to the House were told the day on which they had to present themselves in Oxford.

CHAPTER II

A SETTING AND A DATE

"I am the captive of your bow and spear, sir. The position has its obligations—on both sides. . . . Brainy men languishing under an effete system which, when you take good holt of it, is England—just all England. . . . If you want to realise your assets, you should lease the whole proposition to America for ninety-nine years."

RUDYARD KIPLING: *The Captive.*

I

THE men who in 1914 were of military age, as that definition was used on the outbreak of war, were born at earliest in the middle of the eighties. Queen Victoria was to reign for half a generation longer, Lord Beaconsfield was but lately dead, Mr. Gladstone had ahead of him more than a dozen years of life and one more term as prime minister, and Mr. Parnell was appearing for the first time as the maker and breaker of ministries.

Abroad, Prince Bismarck was still chancellor to the Emperor William I, and the third French Republic was young enough to be still unsteady on its legs; but, since British fears of Russian aggression had been for the most part interred with the bones of Disraeli's spirited foreign policy, the chief imperial problems related to the yet new British responsibility for Egypt and to border wars and punitive expeditions on the fringe of empire. At home, the conservatives, wagged by the

tail of the "fourth party," were coming to terms with the liberal-unionists who had seceded from Mr. Gladstone in 1886; the liberal party, committed to home rule as a first charge, unless the findings of the Parnell commission should discredit its policy, was shelving the rest of its programme and secretly waiting for its leader's death in order to infuse a stronger radicalism than was palatable in the lifetime of a man who had first held office under Sir Robert Peel.

On either side of either house, as on either side of the Irish Sea, the dominant political problem from 1885 to 1895 was the problem of Irish self-government: on this old parties were split and new parties formed; from this proceeded the policies and controversies which filled the life of Parliament to the exclusion of almost everything else for the twenty years from 1895 to the great war. In the first home rule bill and the liberal defeat of 1886, in the Parnell commission and the second home rule bill, in the Parnell divorce and the defeat of Mr. Gladstone's last administration, in the constitutional struggle between Lords and Commons from 1893 to 1911, in the Wyndham land legislation, the devolution scheme and the fall of Mr. Wyndham, in the Irish councils bill, the third home rule bill, the threat of rebellion and the outbreak of civil war, English political history lay under the sable shadow of Ireland, English political interests and developments were sacrificed to Irish demands, and English political parties, jointly and severally, one after another, paid for their failure to give Ireland an acceptable form of self-government.

Though an Irishman brought up in England may lose the faith, the speech and the nationality of the one country without acquiring those of the other, he will in-

evitably be forced into an alternating sympathy with both; and, while he may hesitate to explain the English to the Irish or the Irish to the English, he is bound, by any affection that he may feel for either, to disperse by any means in his power the cloud of tragic misunderstanding which has for so long poisoned the life of both. It was said, in seeming paradox, at a time of diplomatic tension between Great Britain and the United States, that both countries laboured equally under the curse of a common language; and at all times, unless the same words embody the same ideas to both disputants, they will encounter less confusion by translating, however cumbrously, from one language to another. When an American says "gotten", he means "gotten"; but an Englishman is too ready to imagine that he meant to say "got", but unhappily knew no better—until, perhaps, set right. Similarly, a full half of the immemorial friction between Ireland and England arises from the vulgar belief that, because the two peoples employ roughly the same language, they must be one people; the other half from the abysmal ignorance of Ireland exhibited by the English and the no less abysmal ignorance of England exhibited by the Irish. Apart from those who for reasons of sport or business are taken regularly from the one country to the other, there is little intercourse between them: a hundred Englishmen go to France or Italy for one who goes to Ireland; and, without a steadying glimpse of reality to check a too exuberant imagination on either side, the Irishman deduces an England made up of commercial travellers from Liverpool and of six-day trippers to Killarney or Portrush, while the Englishman constructs a figure from the novels of Lever

and half persuades himself that Irishmen habitually brandish shillelaghs and welcome bad government for its own sake and for love of a grievance. The literary conception[1] has been somewhat refined by the writings of Shaw and Synge, of Somerville and Ross, but he would be little out of pocket who offered a reward to any Englishman who could distinguish between the intonation of a Galway fisherman and the accent of Sir Edward Carson.

Some progress towards understanding will be achieved when it is realised that the Irish derive from an older and different wave of westerly migration and were a civilised and proselytising nation when the English were a pagan collection of barbarian tributaries distracted by the withdrawal of the Roman legions from Britain. Insulated from Europe by a second sea, Ireland has retained a faith, a poetry and a mysticism which in England could not withstand the materialising influence of commercial development nor the imperial fruits of participation in European politics; the Irish have never regarded industrial pre-eminence as the goal

[1] Until Irish and English cease to put their trust in allegorical caricatures, there can be no sympathetic understanding between them. Mr. Max Beerbohm has written of the disillusion which he sustained on finding that all bishops were not as Du Maurier had drawn them for *Punch;* and it seems to be a natural failing of the English to see themselves and others in the terms of a Tenniel cartoon. Until the war, every German was blonde, fat, mild and spectacled, with an equal love for sausages, beer, music, metaphysics and a long, china-bowled pipe; the Frenchman, in conical tall-hat, loose tie and peg-top trousers, was excitable and gesticulatory, but polite and—after the *entente* and before the arrival of Carpentier—a man of whom much might be made if he could be interested in field sports. The American, thin, tall and chin-bearded, with fob-pockets and straps to his trousers, was pregnantly deliberate in the artlessly blended dialect of an East-Side saloon-keeper and a Middle-West farmer, while the indolent but dogged John Bull was made the emblem of stupid honesty, good sportsmanship and love of fair play; he was represented as being charged, rather against his inclination, with an imperial mission and as being endowed with a special skill in administering an empire; he was credited with a marrow-deep love of liberty and a genius for self-government. Even the war has done little to disturb these complacent hallucinations.

of human energy and ambition, they never will; and they are deaf to the lure of imperialism. Those who confound mysticism with sentiment mistake the most mystical people in Europe for the most sentimental; the Irish are without sentimentality, and their cynicism, once realised, tempts the bewildered alien to doubt their spiritual quality until he discovers that cynicism may be used as protective colouring. In conflict with neighbours of sometimes less generous soul the Irish forgive easily, perhaps they forgive too easily; they never forget, and perhaps it would be for their good if they learned to forget. They are more chivalrous than most of the nations in Europe and more chaste than any. In common with the rest of the world they believe that a man is worthless unless he will die for his ideals; they believe also that an ideal is worthless if men will not die for it. To the English, who in normal times will do anything for an ideal but sacrifice themselves for it and who will risk their necks for anything but an ideal, this fanaticism is as inexplicable as it is exasperating.

In all political relations an Irishman interprets patriotism to mean his love for Ireland; in all relations with the British Government Ireland is offered, a year too late, what she would have accepted thankfully a year earlier. When English political parties are vying with one another to press upon Ireland a remedy for which the time has passed, it is hard to recall the days when coercion bill trod on the heels of coercion bill and "twenty years of resolute government" was proposed as the blunt, common-sense method of curing a nation that aspired to independence: Ireland turbulent, it was said, was unfit for self-government, Ireland at peace no longer wanted it. In two hundred and fifty years Eng-

land had tried every expedient, from the Cromwellian massacres to the Wyndham land act, with the exception of just that political autonomy which she blessed so fervently when it was won by Greece and Italy, Bulgaria, Servia and Roumania. Still the Irish dreamed of a national destiny, still the imperial genius of the English bled Ireland slowly to death. More than a century after the act of union, a conservative ministry discovered that perhaps the Irish really desired to control their own fate; and the twenty years of resolute government ended in an abortive scheme of devolution. It is true that Mr. Wyndham, a great scholar, a greater gentleman and one of the greatest friends that Ireland ever had, was denounced, betrayed and left to die heartbroken; his work lived after him; and, when the Liberal party returned to power in 1906, it was agreed, though not admitted, by all that some concession must be made to the Irish demand for home rule; all in turn now prescribe milk, when brandy is required, and brandy, when oxygen alone will save the patient's life.

Day after day and year after year, the political youth of any one who was born after the first home rule bill has been overcast by Ireland; for a moment the dream of O'Connell and Parnell seemed likely to be realised by Redmond; but the shadow descended again in the hour of his death to darken the youth of another generation, as it descended in the hour of Mr. Gladstone's last defeat and retirement.

II

If the party of reform in the last years of the nineteenth century seemed to be waiting for the death of its

leader, the whole English world seems, in retrospect, to have been waiting for the death of the older generation and for the passing of an era which was arrested in its decay by the venerable presence and vigour of the queen and Mr. Gladstone, of Cardinal Manning and Cardinal Newman, of Dr. Spurgeon and Miss Nightingale. The great Victorian age, solid and stable, rich in discovery and invention, richer in literature and art, spanned the historical chasm between the eighteenth century and the twentieth: the political unrest and transition which perplexed the sons of George III had given place to an order so settled that, in the last years of George III's granddaughter, it seemed to defy change; the licence which endured as a legacy of the Napoleonic wars and as a memory of the Regency had been ended by the example and influence of the queen; in material strength and in the bewildering splendour of imperial pageantry, England stood higher than at any time since the last years of Queen Elizabeth. There is a tendency among the shallow-minded of the present day to see only the stiff conventionality and smug complacency of Victorianism, to ridicule its solemnity and to castigate its occasional tastelessness: in the eyes of such critics, Victorianism is to be remembered only by the Albert Memorial. Already in the Queen's last years there might be heard murmurs of revolt against the bloodless rectitude of life which she inspired; hopes were entertained that, when at length the Prince of Wales came to the throne, cheerfulness might be allowed to break in; the English had been on their best behaviour for too long and were profoundly bored.

When those who opened their eyes on the second half of the eighties were still young children, the first attack

was made on the outposts of Victorian "respectability": the "new woman" made her appearance, defiantly smoking in public and—until threatened with violence by an outraged and susceptible mob—bicycling about the streets of London in "bloomers"; new ideas were spread, new rights suggested and an alarming new freedom of discussion inaugurated by the plays of Ibsen; a new wave of riches poured into England from the Rand, their possessors resolute to enjoy them without the restrictions of an outworn decorum. The epithet which has become the historic description of these years is "roaring," and, if it described something which by modern standards was mild and blameless, the vigour of the word registers the public misgiving and astonishment at the thing which it described. Nevertheless, though this brawling exuberance gave an earnest of what would come when the brawlers had discredited Victorianism, as yet they misconducted themselves clandestinely or "under the eye of perpetual disapprobation": the nod and frown of the court were still potent; and the rulers of half-a-dozen great houses decided effectively and subject only to the veto of the queen who should be received in the small and envied world known as "society."

In the realm of literature, where the writ of social rulers did not run, a steady movement towards intellectual freedom, more permanent in its results and less open to criticism in its course, made itself felt; and few more illuminating contrasts between the mental range of late Victorianism and that of the present day can be presented than by a study of the once forbidden problems which may now be discussed in novels, on the stage and in the press. The free lover and the unmarried

mother have escaped from the tribunal of the moralist into the consulting-room of the pathologist and the workshop of the artist; diseases never before mentioned have supplied the dramatist with a motive; vices still unmentionable furnish a hinted explanation to the psychologist. And between men and women of almost any age there is an unembarrassed interchange of opinion, not always free from the gratification of morbid curiosity, which exceeds the limits even of what may be debated in print. The belief in safety through innocence has been replaced by a belief in safety through knowledge; the war went far towards completing the work begun by the early prophets of women's rights; while the change in outlook must be recorded, there has not yet been time to judge it in its effects on the well-being of the nation or on the spiritual quality of the individual. The revolutionaries of this, as of all other epochs, are too much concerned in pursuing liberty as an end to regard it as a means.

To them the restrictions of Victorianism would be as intolerable as its pleasures would be insipid. London, in the nineties, formal and unvarying, was only in session from Easter until Goodwood; and the slave of routine followed his appointed path from Sussex to Cowes, from Cowes to a foreign watering-place or to Scotland and from Scotland, by way of long visits in different parts of the country, to the shires, returning to London in the spring after a taste of cosmopolitanism in the south of France. Once more in England, he attended a succession of parties as punctually and conscientiously as he murmured the responses in church; if they grew irksome, there was no alternative, and, if he absented himself, he incurred the suspicion, in that

intimate small world, of having been left uninvited. So for seven days a week and for twelve weeks of seven days: the week-end party, which now diverts a few and exhausts the rest, only dates from the early nineties; Sunday was always passed in London, with church and church parade, a luncheon party and ceremonial calls to urge the lagging hours.

Though the young girl unchaperoned was the young girl abandoned, it is probably the young bachelor who would have most reason to dread the obligations entailed by a plunge back into the nineties. Etiquette ordained that he must leave cards at any house where he had dined or danced; and a call in those strict days, when no one but a sloven would dare to be seen without a tall hat between the months of May and July, postulated that the caller must array himself in frock-coat and all its concomitants and, for a reason still obscure, must carry his hat into the drawing-room. Later, as a concession to human weakness and in imitation of the bar, a morning-coat was permitted; serge suits and bowler hats, exhibiting themselves tentatively at either end of the week, were excused by a presumed sojourn in the country; and then, with the speed of an avalanche, the reign of dandified dowdiness set in, tidying itself slowly into comfort that was also presentable.

III

Politically, too, it was felt that the passing of the Victorian era would be accompanied by upheaval and a transference of power.

The middle-class electorate which ultimately ruled

England from 1832 to 1867 was extended by the reform bills of the latter year and of 1884 to include the vast majority of the adult male working-classes. At the time of this generous dilution Robert Lowe caustically suggested that it would be well to "educate our masters," and in the middle of his 1868 administration Mr. Gladstone introduced universal elementary education into England. The first children to benefit by this belated afterthought were men and women who were in the early twenties by the time that the generation which is now being described was able to read and to see what others were reading; its members grew up side by side with the numerous progeny of a popular, cheap press, and its future rulers were in a state to digest and discuss political problems for themselves and by themselves.

This is not to say that a knowledge of letters gave to democracy political wisdom; it is probable that, while new classes were enabled to spread and to receive political doctrines, later to unite and organise themselves into political bodies, their instinct for affairs became blunted and debased. "Some of us," wrote Lord Bryce in *Modern Democracies,* "remember among the English rustics of sixty years ago shrewd men unable to read, but with plenty of mother wit, and by their strong sense and solid judgement quite as well qualified to vote as are their grandchildren to-day who read a newspaper and revel in the cinema. The first people who ever worked popular government, working it by machinery more complicated than ours, had no printed page to learn from. . . . These Greek voters learnt their politics not from the printed, and few even from any written page, but by listening to accomplished orators and by talking to one another. . . . It is thinking that matters, not

reading. . . . In conversation there is a clash of wits, and to that some mental exertion must go. . . . The man who reads only the newspaper of his own party, and reads its political intelligence in a medley of other stuff, narratives of crimes and descriptions of football matches, need not know that there is more than one side to a question. . . . The printed page, because it seems to represent some unknown power, is believed more readily than what he hears in talk. . . . A party organ, suppressing some facts, misrepresenting others, is the worst of all guides. . . . That impulse to hasty and ill-considered action which was the besetting danger of ruling assemblies swayed by orators, will reappear in the impression simultaneously produced through the press on masses of men all over a large country."

It is possible that the last thirty years may come to be regarded, in the development of democracy, as the history of the press rising victorious over the political mass-meeting, even as the political mass-meeting, since the days of Mr. Gladstone's electoral campaign of 1880, had been gradually rising victorious over the House of Commons. It is possible again that the present moment registers the highest point which newspaper influence will reach and that, during the next thirty years, the publicity of the cinematograph and of the poster will rise victorious over the press. The patriotism of the public during the war was kept alive by direct and simple appeals to enlistment and economy; they issued their message from every hoarding and competed for public interest with advertisements for patent foods and soaps. Though its want of dignity may have offended the fastidious, this method of propaganda permitted neither argument nor contradiction; the government stated its

case and plastered the countryside with an exhortation or declaration for which the public paid and which the press could not overtake. Since the war, the government has employed this method of propaganda in more than one industrial dispute: wages and profits, nationalisation and private ownership are debated on convenient walls; it is recognised that, in a democracy, knowledge must not be denied to the people; and, as in the first French revolution, it is believed that the information can be supplied most attractively by the government itself. Robert Lowe, were he still alive, might feel malicious satisfaction in seeing the use to which democracy had put its long-deferred education and the manner in which the ultimate masters of democracy are educated.

The immediate effect of diffused, cheap printing and of the power of reading and expression was that democracy became articulate and organised, ready to play in the business of government that part to which it was entitled by its votes, but to which others were by no means ready to admit it. In the conversation and literature of these years may be traced a profound uneasiness at the onward march of labour, and the opponents of democracy vented their fear and hostility in outbursts of almost hysterical bitterness against the ignorant, gullible, self-seeking and rapacious proletariat into whose hands the welfare of the empire had been surrendered.

In 1833 Carlyle's Teufelsdröckh had written: "Two men I honour, and no third. First, the toil-worn Craftsman that with earth-made Implement laboriously conquers the Earth, and makes her man's. Venerable to me is the hard Hand; crooked, coarse; wherein notwithstanding lies a cunning virtue, indefeasibly royal, as of the Sceptre of this Planet. Venerable, too, is the rugged

face, all weather-tanned, besoiled, with its rude intelligence; for it is the face of a Man living manlike. O, but the more venerable for thy rudeness, and even because we must pity as well as love thee! Hardly-entreated brother! For us was thy back so bent, for us were thy straight limbs and fingers so deformed: thou wert our Conscript, on whom the lot fell, and fighting our battles wert so marred." In 1850 the fear of Chartism had purged Carlyle's mind of this veneration, pity and love for a man living manlike, a hardly-entreated brother and a conscript who had been marred in fighting the battles of others. "Consider, in fact," he exhorts his readers, "a body of Six-hundred and fifty-eight miscellaneous persons set to consult about 'business' with Twenty-seven millions mostly fools assiduously listening to them, and checking and criticising them—was there ever since the world began, will there ever be till the world end, any 'business' accomplished in these circumstances?"

For fifty years, from Carlyle to Kipling, this scorn for a deliberative assembly and this contempt for an electorate which had hitherto been sedulously denied all political education frustrated all attempts to modify the old machine of government and to assimilate the new rulers to the old. "Bigots," said Macaulay, ". . . . never fail to plead in justification of persecution the vices which persecution has engendered. England has been to the Jews less than half a country; and we revile them because they do not feel for England more than a half patriotism. We treat them as slaves, and wonder that they do not regard us as brethren. . . ."

With little change of language, the disabilities of the Jews could be paralleled by the disabilities of labour;

and both were defended by the same spirit of blatant intolerance which rose in a self-satisfied *crescendo* during the second half of the nineteenth century, till a cynic might have said that, as there had been no class-antagonism, it would become necessary to create one. Of the present conflict between classes and of any conflict in the immediate future the seeds were sown in the last years of Queen Victoria's reign.

IV

The men of this epoch grew up half-way between the second harvest of great nineteenth-century literature and the first crop of the twentieth. In their early boyhood, Tennyson was still Poet Laureate, Browning was still prolific and Swinburne's last song was not yet sung; George Meredith and Thomas Hardy were still in practise as novelists, and Robert Louis Stevenson was approaching the climax of his powers; John Ruskin, though silent, was still alive; the influence of Walter Pater was at its zenith; the reputation of Herbert Spencer stood higher than at any time before or since; and John Morley was in his prime. Among the younger men who were winning fame—with the surge and thunder that heralded the youth of the nineties—was Rudyard Kipling; the seething brain of H. G. Wells was boiling over into scientific romance; and old romance was brought to life by the charm of Anthony Hope. Among those who were doing the work for which a belated fame was reserved were Samuel Butler and Joseph Conrad. For experimenting, adventurous youth the pages of *The Yellow Book* lay open; "the men of the

nineties" flashed meteorically across the deafened heavens, and, when they had passed with their falsity and clamour, there was discovered in their train the more abiding genius of Whistler and Beardsley, the precocious, detached perfection of Beerbohm, the occasional beauty of Gray and Dowson, the alternate paste and diamond of Oscar Wilde.

These were the last working years of Leighton and Watts, of Holman Hunt and Morris, of Tenniel and Crane; the heyday of Ricketts and Shannon; the morning of Phil May. They were the years, too, of the first illustrated magazines and of those *Strands,* ever memorable to the boys of that generation, in which *Sherlock Holmes* appeared month after month.

A new chapter in dramatic history was opened by Pinero with *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray;* and, though Shaw and Barrie were not yet come into their own, though Galsworthy and Barker were not yet articulate, the last decade of the nineteenth century was the summer time of the British stage for a hundred years. Irving ruled still imperially, with Terriss, Forbes Robertson and Wyndham among his marshals; Boucicault, Toole and Bancroft were still alive; it was not yet impossible to find a theatre for serious drama, and the seductions of burlesque and of musical comedy were confined to Daly's and the old Gaiety.

The music-halls of that period did not come within the purview of a boy: the humour was too broad, the air too much tainted, the associations too squalid; but in those days the true "variety entertainment"—exhibiting hardly less continuity than the modern *revue*—was still to be seen, the old-fashioned chairman still sat at his table surrounded by privileged friends, the prices

were half those of the theatre, it was exceptional for a man to appear in evening dress and inconceivable for a woman of repute to appear at all.

The memory of a child is pierced, deeply and without order, by quarter-comprehended sights and sounds. Those were the days of Lottie Collins and *Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay,* of *The Man Who Broke the Bank at Monte Carlo* and of *The Bicycle Made for Two*—this last to commemorate the safety bicycle which took England by storm and urged the citizens of London in endless, untiring circles round Regent's Park on Sunday mornings. These were the days of May Yohe and *Honey, ma Honey,* of Hayden Coffin and *Sunshine Above,* of Albert Chevalier and his coster songs; of Dan Leno and Herbert Campbell in immortal partnership at Drury Lane pantomimes, of Corney Grain—and a piano; of Sims Reeves at the Queen's Hall, old and inexpressibly sweet; of Maskelyne and Cook at the Egyptian Hall, of Moore and Burgess at the St. James' Hall; they were the days of "Niagara" and the old Aquarium.

It was in the middle nineties, when the "knife-board" omnibus was still to be seen in the streets, that London was excited by an exhibition of "horseless carriages," though for a few years still a small boy might be driven to Berkeley Square on a summer afternoon, there to draw up under the trees opposite Gunter's and consume raspberry ices. In those days the cows and milk-stall were not yet evicted from St. James' Park; Booksellers Row had not been sacrificed to the improvement of London, which was then more picturesque and less sanitary. Those were the days of the long frost; the days of the Klondike gold-rush, the Jameson raid, the Græco-

Turkish war; days in which a boy heard dying rumours of a "baccarat case," of the Parnell divorce, of Barnie Barnato's death, rumours more active but less intelligible of vast financial operations and vaster crashes.

The first five years of life, perhaps the first seven, are the hinterland of memory in which a trail is blazed by word or name and, later, a road straightened and made durable by reading. After seven, memory is in ordered cultivation: after 1895 public events marshal themselves and stand out against the uneventful background of the child's daily life. The fall of the Rosebery government seemed less important than Mr. Gladstone's retirement the year before and, to a boy, neither equalled in excitement the Diamond Jubilee with its thanksgiving-service and procession, its songs and marches, its bunting and illumination. A year later the newsbills stopped every passer-by with the words: "DEATH OF GLADSTONE"; and children who had never seen him cried in the streets of London as they had cried in America or Italy at the passing of Lincoln or Garibaldi.

A year later still came rumours of discord in South Africa; and the patriot of the private school waited eagerly for a declaration of war, less eagerly for news that President Kruger had yielded to pressure; the memory of the Spithead review which had followed the massing of an empire's troops at the Diamond Jubilee was still vivid, and in a hundred thousand truculent hearts there lurked the sinister thought that an army and navy were useless if they did not fight and that small nations existed, in the scheme of creation, to be taught sharp lessons. The handful of opponents who cried out on an impious war of aggression were shouted down or manhandled as "pro-Boers" until the cheers

of the Irish and of a few radicals, when a British reverse was announced in the House of Commons, convinced the wondering militarists that opposition might be prompted by a moral sense as well as by native factiousness. These were the days of *The Absent-Minded Beggar,* of "Black Friday" and the Fall of Ladysmith, of the aged queen's recruiting-tour in Ireland, of the relief of Mafeking and "Mafeking Night" in London; the days when Lord Roberts and Lord Kitchener were sent out to cut short the retribution which the arrogance of a swollen power had called down upon its head, the days of concentration-camps and "the methods of barbarism," of the "Khaki" election, of *The Islanders* and the last despairing shriek of that vulgar ferocity which had brought about this needless and iniquitous bloodshed; the days of Queen Victoria's last illness and death, the approach of peace.

The chapter of imperialism which opened with Mr. Chamberlain's ultimatum and ended with Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman's grant of self-government to the Union of South Africa was only symptomatic of a wider-spread arrogance and savagery. While the war was still in progress, another chapter of history, shorter but not less infamous, was being enacted in the suppression of the Boxer rising and—incidentally—in the looting of the palace at Pekin. It was in the middle of these two excursions that there began the six years' sojourn at Westminster, to which reference was made in the last chapter.

CHAPTER III

CHRIST CHURCH

"Come, doctor," said Euphranor, suddenly, "you, who find such fault with others' education, shall tell me how *you* would bring up a young knight, till you turned him out of your hands a Man."

. . . . . .

"I doubt I shall be content with him," said I, "if (at sixteen say) he shows me outwardly . . . a glowing cheek, an open brow, copious locks, a clear eye, and looks me full in the face withal; . . . the blood running warm and quick through his veins, and easily discovering itself in his cheeks and forehead, at the mention of what is noble or shameful. . . . Candid of soul I hope he is; for I have always sought his confidence, and never used it against himself. . . . He is still passionate perhaps, as in his first septenniad, but easily reconciled; subdued easily by affection and the appeal to old and kindly remembrance, but stubborn against force; generous, forgiving: still liking to ride rather than to read, and perhaps to settle a difference by the fist than by the tongue; but submitting to those who do not task him above Nature's due. . . ."

"And this is your education," said Euphranor, "for all boys indiscriminately, without regard to any particular genius they may show."

"But without injury to it, I hope," said I; . . . "if Sir Lancelot not only *has* a Genius, (as I suppose all men have some,) but *is* a Genius—big with Epic, Lyrical or Parliamentary inspiration,—I do not meddle with him—he will take his own course in spite of me. What I have to turn out is, not a Genius, but a Young Gentleman, qualified at least for the common professions, or trades, if you like it. Or if he have means and inclination to live independently on his estate, may, *in spite* of his genius, turn into a very good husband, father, neighbour, and magistrate. . . ."

EDWARD FITZGERALD: *Euphranor: A Dialogue on Youth.*

I

AT noon on Friday of the second week in October, 1906, a slow procession of cabs jingled down the slope from the Great Western station at Oxford and turned under the bridge towards the middle of the

town. At Carfax they separated east, north and south, bearing through the High, the Corn and Saint Aldates their burden of expectant, fluttered freshmen, who had been summoned, on this first day of the term, to present themselves early for admission to their colleges and university. At Tom Gate the new-comers to the House enquired for their rooms, paid their cabmen and left their luggage to follow them. Over the doors in Peckwater or Canterbury, Meadow Buildings, Old Library or Tom they found their names painted in black on a white ground; they introduced themselves to their scouts —who alone in all Oxford affected interest in their existence,—ordered luncheon and sat down to recall the more pressing advice on deportment which had been bestowed on them.

To a freshman, the etiquette and technique of Oxford abound in real and, still more, in imaginary pitfalls. He may live for years on the same staircase as a man one term his senior, but, unless they have been introduced, he must never bow nor say "good-morning" to him. The senior would, perhaps, leave a card on the freshman, choosing a moment when he was not at home; the freshman must return his call, but it was not enough to leave a card: he must go on calling until he ran him to earth. In all things a freshman must comport himself humbly, taking a distant seat in the junior common room and leaving the arm-chairs in front of the fire to those who better deserved them. There were rules of dress and rules of conduct; there were clubs which a man would feel honoured to join and clubs which he would prudently avoid; there were games worth playing and games that were waste of time.

When the appointed day came, the ordeal was re-

freshingly light and quickly forgotten in the joyous sense of possession which a man's own rooms, with his shining, black name painted over the door, gives him more fully, perhaps, than he ever knows later; the sense of protection, too, at a time when he feels more solitary and unwanted than ever before. Though the carpet were threadbare and the curtains dingy, though sofa and chairs needed recovering and the meagre blankets on one bed bore the name of "Arthur Bourchier" and a date four years before the new owner was born, the rooms belonged to him *de facto,* and within a few hours he would *de jure* belong to them; it was time to unpack books and pictures and to study the regulations and hints embodied in the brochure libellously known as "The Blue Liar."

After luncheon the freshmen were collected in Hall for presentation to the Dean.[1] The Old Westminsters gathered together to discuss their rooms and to exchange whispered confidences. From Hall they were ushered to the Old Schools and admitted members of the university by the vice-chancellor. Then they drew breath.

The bond of an identic school held them in small groups which explored one another's rooms and perambulated Oxford to purchase bedroom ware and such other necessaries of life as had not been included in the equipment taken over, at a valuation, from the previous tenants. They made a preliminary inspection of picture shops and turned over the books in Blackwell's; they bought tobacco—and refused to buy pipe-racks and tobacco-jars enriched with the college arms, because these were "freshers' delights" and a mark of juvenility to

[1] While this book was writing, I learned to my own regret and to the abiding loss of the House, that Dr. Strong, an Old Westminster, had been appointed to the bishopric of Ripon.

be avoided. Then they returned to college and discovered that already a few of their senior friends had left cards. And then it was time to discover which were the freshmen's tables in hall.

If for an hour or two it had seemed that no one but their scouts was interested in their existence, they were to find within their first week a flattering competition for their company. First of all, their tutors invited them to call and arrange what lectures they were to attend; after that, the president and secretary of innumerable clubs solicited their patronage. Then came the turn of the literary and debating societies, in which the House abounded. It was a matter of no little importance to have a club-meeting for at least six nights in the week: only the more serious members stayed for anything but the highly personal questions and motions of "private business," but during that first stimulating half-hour the visitors and their hosts could feast richly and variously on the abundant dessert supplied by the club; at nine o'clock they could leave, pleasantly sated, to work, talk or pay calls, while the club stalwarts remained to read plays or, unwillingly and at short notice, to deliver conscientious speeches on the political problems of the day.[1]

Outside the college there was an almost unlimited choice of university clubs: the Bullingdon, Vincent's and the Grid were purely sporting or social, the O.U.D.S. was primarily theatrical, while the Union—though it was not popular at the House at this time—

[1] From time to time the regular speakers went on strike. It was then usual for one to propose the motion "That something be now done" and to secure that it was not carried, thus holding up all public business indefinitely. At Univ., I believe, it was customary to open the proceedings of the "Shakespeare" with a resolution "That the Bard be not read."

provided the biggest audiences and the most serious debating. In addition, the Canning and Chatham, the Palmerston and Russell, the Strafford and Gladstone, the St. Patrick's and a dozen more offered a varied bill of fare to every political appetite and entailed on their members the obligation of reading a solemn paper once in every few terms and of listening to the solemn papers of other members once a week. At their annual "wines" and dinners the young politician met such of the leading liberals as could be enticed to Oxford; after the arid detachment of politics at school, one meeting with a single minister seemed to bring the pulsing heart of government nearer; there followed cards for receptions in London and invitations to join the Eighty Club.

Perhaps by reason of its size, the House escaped or defied any effort to impose a uniform spirit or code. Its members were indeed united in such practises as dressing for the theatre and in such conventions as a general disinclination for the society of other colleges; but this was largely because they were numerous enough to provide every one with the friends, the clubs and the interests that he required without seeking them abroad. Rival foundations charged them with superiority and sectionalism; but, if they had ever made a claim for themselves, it would only have been that they allowed their neighbours to live unmolested. There was no Sunday-evening "After," at which the whole college met; no concert; no "Freshmen's Wine." All were left free to choose their friends and to pass their time as they liked, provided that they did not offend against public taste or make a nuisance of themselves to their neighbours.

New friendships came rapidly in those first few weeks.

At the freshmen's tables in hall, the freshmen's pews in the cathedral, on the football-ground, in the common room and clubs and at a score of breakfast-parties given for their benefit, the men in their first year came to know one another. There followed testing, sifting and an occasional change of value; the bond of the identic school was gradually relaxed; and small groups broke away from the general tables in hall and established messes of their own.

II

Oxford is a loose confederation of jealously independent states; and a man must have considerable personality or prowess to be known outside his own college. There are always one or two men[1] with a reputation extending beyond their own walls and promising a later distinction; but there are seldom more than a handful of exceptions in any undergraduate generation. Of the House this is especially true, as it is almost a university in itself, and no one need go outside it. The patriotism and hero-worship of a public school had made it inconceivable that a new boy should pass one week without knowing who was the Captain of Cricket; at Oxford in every year there must have been hundreds unaware who was President of the Boat Club. The greatest emancipation that came to all on leaving school was just this freedom to be interested in what they liked. The tyranny of games was broken; the snobbism of pretended enthusiasms sank into abeyance; and many who

[1] In these years Ronald Knox, Patrick Shaw-Stewart and Charles Lister occupied a place once filled by Raymond Asquith and, before him, shared by John Simon, F. E. Smith, Hilaire Belloc and E. G. Hemmerde.

had been despised and rejected at school began suddenly to shine as unexpected social lights.

The choice of friends marched step by step with the tentative first efforts in hospitality. Entertaining is made easy in a college where a man orders breakfast or luncheon for as many guests as his rooms will contain, where the epicure descends to the college kitchen and chooses an apolaustic repast, where wine and cup are as easily had from the buttery and where the junior common room supplies the coffee and dessert. His scout and scout's boy prepare the table and attend to the waiting (how they do it when several parties take place simultaneously on the same staircase is a craft-secret which is handed down from one generation to another); when his own cutlery, glass and china run short, his scout borrows from the abundance of a neighbour. And, when the feast is done, the host is not disturbed by the frugal housewife's concern for the broken meats, for they have been decently packed and discreetly removed by his scout. The imagination of the curious may sometimes exercise itself to picture the internal chaos of a scout's digestion: for six days he subsists chiefly on superfluous butter and remainder loaves; the seventh day is one on which every undergraduate seeks to give a luncheon-party or to attend the board of a friend. On that day the scout must fare bewilderingly on undetected treasures of dressed crab, unwanted drum-sticks of chicken, trembling ruins of fruit-jelly and the unmortised halves of meringues; yet longevity is the reward of their imprudence.

There is, furthermore, a guest-table in Hall;[1] there

[1] I am informed by my friend, Captain Stephen Holmes, M.C., to whom I am indebted for many valuable suggestions, that the use of the guest-table had to be suspended owing to the rush of new members to the House in 1919.

are dining-clubs; and, when a man is grown weary of monotony, the Grid, the O.U.D.S. and Vincent's supply relief to their members. For the first weeks, indeed, the hospitality comes all from the seniors; then it is time for a freshman to repay it and to strike out for himself in entertaining the new friends of his own year. It is a delicate and embarrassing enterprise, for all the mechanical aid of kitchen and scout: the inexpert host fears that he has not ordered enough, he never knows how long to wait for a fourth-year man who lives out of college and has perhaps forgotten the invitation, he fails to realise—until he has himself ceased to be a freshman—the devastating horror of a three- or four-course breakfast at half-past eight with obligatory conversation. And, not content with one venture, he repeats it in cold blood.

The emancipation in being allowed to choose friends and amusements is hardly greater than the latitude in arranging the work of three or four years. A mathematical scholar is, indeed, not expected to read the Modern Language School; but for the commoner there is almost unlimited range of optional subjects to take and varied lectures to attend. Here is a further step in emancipation and responsibility: when a man has satisfied the bare minimum demanded by authority, he must work out his own salvation; there is a point at which, if he will not read for himself, it is not worth any one's while to compel him. Many of those who kept a political goal ahead of them elected to study Modern History, for which it may be asserted that in scope and variety, in the volume of reading, the mental discipline and the practical benefit of knowledge and perspective it excels even the final school of *Literæ Humaniores*

which has been for so long the peculiar glory of Oxford. Touching the ancient world at one end and modern politics at the other, interlaced with geography, economics, political science, law and modern languages, it does indeed exclude natural science and Asiatic languages, but it excludes little else.[1]

III

Some of the most common English phrases are also those which most obstinately defy exact definition. It is related of an obscure enquirer that he gave his life to elucidating the significance of "a man-about-town," having met the phrase but not the type to which it is applied. For years he wandered moodily about London in search of a specimen, growing ever more abstracted and becoming in time a familiar figure in the streets, until his researches were cut short on the day when he was knocked down by a motor-bus and fatally injured. Though carried promptly to the nearest hospital, he survived only a few hours; as the end approached, one of the nurses sought to strengthen his resistance by shewing him an account of the mishap in an early edition of an evening paper; the last words that he ever read were: "ACCIDENT TO WELL-KNOWN MAN-ABOUT-TOWN."

A fate as disappointing, if not so tragic, awaits him who seeks to find a definition of "the Oxford manner."

[1] One man became so much obsessed by the universality of a school in which all knowledge had a place, if he could but find it, that he was discovered on the morning of his examination committing to memory the statement of the *Morning Post* that Lady X had left Hill Street for Scotland; somehow, he felt, this had a bearing on modern history; and I have no doubt that he used the information to illustrate a point of manorial tenure or to differentiate between the life of the new nobility and that described by Tacitus in the *Germania*.

It is seemingly a blazon borne by every man who has been at Oxford and quickly recognised by every one who has not. When Herrick in *The Ebb Tide* anchored in the lagoon of an uncharted Pacific pearl-fishery, something in his speech or bearing caused Attwater to ask: '"University man?" . . . "Yes, Merton," said Herrick, and the next moment blushed scarlet at his indiscretion. "I am of the other lot," said Attwater: "Trinity Hall, Cambridge. I call my schooner after the old shop. . . ." ' Without delay Attwater then made himself insolently rude to the two men who had been neither at Oxford nor at Cambridge. The fact that Stevenson was himself an Edinburgh man may explain his creature's ability to detect the Oxford manner; for Oxford men the task is less easy and is but made the harder by the involved analysis which explains it as "the expression of a superiority which every Oxford man is too superior to shew."

So little sense of superiority clouds the brain of most Oxford men that they are humbly grateful, their whole life through, for their good fortune in spending three happy years, howsoever little distinguished, in the most beautiful of all kingdoms of youth. No city in the world has been so decreed, constructed, endowed and ordered for the benefit and enjoyment of the boys who there reach a privileged manhood. The university returns its own members to parliament and preserves order among the undergraduates by means of the proctors and their satellites; the vice-chancellor's court stands between debtor and creditor; and a member of the *corps diplomatique* in a foreign capital is hardly more "extra-territorial" than the undergraduate at Oxford. This is partly the law and partly the custom of the constitution;

but to the visitor it is less impressive than that the entire economic and social dispensation should have for object the comfort and happiness of three thousand men between the ages of eighteen and twenty-two. The colleges, their gardens and pleasances; the river and its barges; the theatre and clubs; the shops and streets; all have been designed on the presumption that Oxford contains no women and that the men are of an age that never changes.[1] In their midst there are, indeed, "townees," but even the shops at which they buy their meat are not suffered to desecrate the beauty of the High; there are straggling acres of houses in North Oxford, but they exist in the undergraduate scheme as unwelcome destinations for a duty call on Sunday afternoons in winter; the undergraduate horizon is bounded by Christ Church Meadows and the Broad, by Magdalen Bridge and Carfax; their world consists of those who live within these limits.

Of the three thousand who for three or four years gloried in that kingdom, a few did no work at all and, when their days of grace expired, went down for good or until they had passed the necessary examinations; those who hoped for a high class in an honour school perforce worked hard during term and harder in vacation; the average man of average intelligence, reading a pass school, could be content with four or six hours' work a day and an untroubled vacation.

More than six hours is not easy to maintain, for, though the term is but eight weeks long, a man is living at high pressure in a low-lying city. Those who had

[1] I write of 1906-9, before women were admitted to degrees or accorded an academic position or costume.

their schools at heart would get up at half-past seven and keep a chapel at eight, read the morning paper, breakfast with friends or by themselves and begin work at nine or ten; on most days they would have lectures or a "private hour" with their tutors and for the rest of the morning they worked in their rooms or in the library. At one o'clock the quadrangle woke to sudden life with men returning from lectures, men on their way out to luncheon, men in stocks and breeches assembling at Canterbury Gate to drive in brakes to a meet of the House beagles. They exchanged the news and badinage of the day, from the middle of Peck to an attic window, and from one window to another; the quadrangle emptied and sank again to silence, as they repaired to the common-room for a light repast of bananas and milk or toast and honey. And in turn the common room, which had filled suddenly, as suddenly emptied; within a quarter of an hour all had dispersed to the football ground or the House barge, a private gravel tennis-court or the hockey ground; one or two went sailing on the Upper River, one or two more hacked slowly out of Oxford for a gallop on Port Meadow or Shotover; and, as every generation discovered for itself the beauty of the surrounding country and fell anew under its spell at the whisper of the old unforgettable names, the pedestrians struck north-west or south-west to "the warm, green-muffled Cumner Hills", "the stripling Thames at Bablock-hithe", "Godstow Bridge, when hay-time's here in June", "the skirts of Bagley Wood" or "Hinksey and its wintry ridge".

Convention and climate ordain that no one in Oxford shall work in the early afternoon; when the sacred exer-

cise has been taken and all are refreshed by tea in common room or at home, there is time for two hours' reading before Hall. After that, a man may go to the theatre, where he will find a tolerable selection of companies and of "London successes"; [1] he may look in at a club or retire to finish a belated essay in his rooms; he may dawdle over coffee in the common room and stroll back with a friend for one of those endless disputations which clear the head and suggest a new point of view—raw, paradoxical stuff, it may be, but earnestly argued and perhaps making up in idealism what it lacked in experience. Whatever is "universal" in university education comes chiefly from the men of one's own age and from the distillation of three thousand minds seething with youth and a new encouragement to self-expression which

[1] Once a year the Gilbert and Sullivan operas came to Oxford; the booking opened a week in advance, and a queue stretched the length of George Street and half-way down the Corn. For days before and afterwards every piano in the college was tinkling with "The Silver Church" or the "Peers' Chorus." And we, in 1909, were privileged to entertain at luncheon Fred Billington, a great comedian and the greatest of all Pooh Bahs; fifteen or twenty of us, of the true Gilbert and Sullivan faith, shyly fed him with roast turkey and plum pudding, and he too was a little shy, suspecting some practical joke.

The visitor is sometimes surprised that the New Theatre contains no boxes; the reason was supplied, in my day, by a famous living actor, who explained that he and his friends had attended a melodrama in the old theatre and had taken an uncontrollable dislike for the villain's trousers. As Æschylus undertook to finish any prologue of Euripides with the words "ληκύθιον ἀπώλεσεν," so this undergraduate party qualified the villain's every boast and confession with the words: "*Not* in those trousers."

The dialogue ran roughly thus:

Villain. I will carry the girl off and make her my wife——
Interrupters. *Not* in those trousers.
Villain. I will be revenged——
Interrupters. *Not* in those trousers.
Villain. I will stick at nothing——
Interrupters. *Not* in those trousers.

As the curtain fell on the first act, the interrupters leapt from their box on the stage and pursued the villain down the Corn and the High until they captured him on Magdalen Bridge. They then returned to the theatre with the offending trousers but without the villain.

Jowett, as vice-chancellor, decreed that in the new theatre no boxes should be built.

had been rigorously withheld at school.[1] If the scope of reading is limited there, the limitations are broken down to some extent by the sum of all the reading in all the public schools. It was in the intimate late hours when some club had dispersed that one man would talk of Browning's Jewish blood and reproduce the savage indignation of *Holy Cross Day;* another would give forth the magic music of Synge's plays; and a generation which had hitherto escaped the theological preoccupation of the Victorian era argued Renan and discussed *The Golden Bough* in comfort of mind.

IV

If in the pooling of their enthusiasms the men of this vanished generation advanced even one step towards the universality of spirit which is the intellectual vision of a university, they advanced many steps nearer to a social universality than had been possible at school. Eton, by virtue of its size and repute, is fed, within the limits of one plane, by the greatest number of tributaries; but Westminster and Harrow, Winchester, Rugby and Charterhouse are filled each from its own well-defined source. At Oxford, in greater or lesser degree, hitherto unfamiliar types mingled for the first time and, in social and political debate, encountered the embodiment of what had hitherto been malevolent abstractions: an Orange land-owner lived over the head of a rebellious home ruler; the hereditary legislator sat in Hall beside the radical who expended his eloquence

[1] The late Sir Edward Cook once did me the honour to quote the words of one of my own characters: "I am tempted to wonder whether it much matters what a man be taught, so long as he meet enough men who have been taught something else." Therein lies the difference between university education and all other kinds.

in trying to abolish the House of Lords. There were Catholics, Presbyterians and an occasional Jew; rich men, poor men; scholars, dunces; sceptics and fanatics; prigs and worldlings; incipient swindlers, congenital debauchees and a vast representation of the vast average English class which is between rich and poor, which is shrewd without being subtile, tenacious but practical, self-satisfied but self-depreciatory, with conservative instincts and radical initiative.

To all and to each, Oxford smilingly proferred her inexhaustible tray of *cotillon* favours. There was and is and, seemingly, always must be a class debarred by poverty from entering this kingdom; but, once inside, there is an unmatched equality of opportunity for rich and poor, exalted and humble, an unprecedented freedom for each to express his individuality in the choice of his work and recreation, his friends and life. Though there, as elsewhere, the deepest pocket commanded the greatest material comfort, narrow means were no obstacle to the enjoyment and profit which every man could extract from four years of the most democratic life that England provided outside the House of Commons; nowhere was a man taken more ungrudgingly on his merits, nowhere did the eccentric—were he poser, experimenter or monomaniac—obtain a better run for his money.

In these days of fifteen years ago, came the first batch of Rhodes scholars. Nothing but a war will drive the average Englishman to look at a map; and nothing less than the late war would have stirred the imagination of the English to concern for the size and cohesion of the British Empire. Cecil Rhodes had been dead nearly half a generation before South Africans and Aus-

tralians, New Zealanders and Canadians—to name but a few—met together on a single battle-front; but his vision embraced what the war of 1914 made actual, and he, who confessedly owed more to Oxford than to any other phase of his career, made Oxford the trial-ground for the greatest historical experiment in imperial education. With the effect of Oxford on the Rhodes scholars only a Rhodes scholar is competent to deal; the influence of the Rhodes scholars on Oxford was marked. They were the picked men from the universities of the world; not only from the dominions and colonies of the British Empire, but from Germany as well, for Rhodes felt that conflict between the two countries could most surely be avoided by making their peoples better acquainted. Chosen for general prowess—in sport, in work, in the popularity and position which they had attained in their own universities,—they came somewhat older than the generality in years and much older in experience; they brought new intellectual standpoints and a deliberate wisdom to leaven the facile cleverness and omniscience of British Oxford.[1]

[1] It is hardly possible to think of Oxford in those years without thinking of the second volume of *Sinister Street* and of the great picture in which Compton Mackenzie's observation, memory and delicate realization of atmosphere were so triumphantly blended. At the House we had, no doubt, a stereotyped conception of the "typical" New College man; Balliol, no doubt, had its conventional idea of the average St. John's man; it was left to Compton Mackenzie to shew, from the angle of Magdalen, the reaction of the Exeter "type" on the imagination of Univ. The book is confined within the limits which Oxford of necessity imposes on herself as the theme or background of a novel; Oxford is a phase through which youth passes, a kingdom wherein it tarries, a hive where it grows and works towards maturity; it is not generally a scene of romance, of spiritual crisis or emotional clash; and, because most novels on Oxford persist in forcing drama into the least dramatic lives, they stand condemned as psychological confusions. It is a kingdom of youth because youth is made comfortably secure from the material conflicts of conventional drama; and youth, however intensely interested in itself, does not regard its spiritual conflicts seriously, it no longer agonizes in doubt nor wrestles in prayer, and, if it fall in love, ecstacy will disturb its digestion as little as despair will

Those three or four years resolve themselves into a collection of exquisite memories in miniature; but, day after day and term after term, nothing ever happened to shake a man's soul from its seating. There were glorious parties in college and on the river; there were great rides and walks; there were splendid disputations. During Eights Week a man invited his sisters and friends to lunch with him; shy and self-conscious, he met them at the station and piloted them informatively through the cathedral and hall, the cloisters and library and kitchen until it was time to stroll back to his rooms, where through the flower-boxes and open windows could be seen cold salmon and roast chicken, meringues, strawberries-and-cream and cider-cup spread out in monotonous invitation, where, too, the prudent host had enlisted his most socially gifted friends to ease the burden of hospitality. Replete and a trifle weary of so much good behaviour, he and his friends threaded their way through the crowded Meadows and took up their position on the barge, returning between second and first division for tea. Utterly exhausted, he at last drove his patient guests to the station and returned for dinner and uninterrupted celibacy.[1]

derange its slumbers. And the novelist of Oxford who writes with perspective and a sense of the appropriate must treat his material as youth awakening but not yet awake and as youth snugly protected from reality.

For this reason and under these limitations, all women, all men who do not know Oxford and even the men who do will, in that order, be prudently advised to leave Oxford alone; after *Sinister Street,* with its analysis and atmosphere, its restraint and its consummate handling of countless figures on a giant canvas, there is no room for a book conceived on similar lines or scale; the novelist must force upon Oxford something which Oxford disowns or he may turn disgustedly away from a place where innumerable people talk and think endlessly about something that does not matter to any one else and where nothing ever happens.

[1] The House went head of the river in 1907 and remained there for the rest of my time, an achievement to be periodically celebrated with a triumphant bump-supper, fire-works and a bonfire which once afforded to some an opportunity of venting their displeasure on the Oxford Pageant stands.

Hardly had he recovered from the social exigencies of Eights Week than Commemoration was upon him with sterner demands, longer drawn out. For anxious weeks he debated which balls he would attend and who should be invited to go with him; parties were arranged, rooms engaged; and for one, two or three nights he danced indefatigably from nine till five or six, then shivered in a wind-swept quadrangle or on the pavement outside the Town Hall while he surrendered to the undergraduate herd-instinct of being commemoratively photographed. Then, perhaps, he would go to bed for a few hours, rising wearily to take part in a picnic on the Cher and returning in time to dress for the next ball, and the more conscientious sort—hosts and guests alike —would insist on being present at the Encænia.[1]

Before Commemoration is over, many were laying their plans for Henley. After that, the pleasure-lovers went to London for the last weeks of the season; and, for the serious workers, the coming of August marked the beginning of a long ten weeks of uninterrupted reading.

So from term to term and year to year. Every sum-

[1] Mark Twain was the recipient of an honorary degree in these years, and the welcome accorded him was characteristic. By an unhappy coincidence certain news-bills had appeared with the words: "ARRIVAL OF MARK TWAIN IN ENGLAND. THEFT OF ASCOT GOLD CUP." Before he was allowed to take his degree, an untiring undergraduate chorus demanded to know: "Now, Mark, what did you do with the Gold Cup?" His reply I never heard; it was probably adequate, though occasionally he met his match in repartee. Once when he was staying in England as a young man, the income-tax authorities sent him an assessment form which he referred to Queen Victoria with the statement that he had not the honour to be one of her subjects; she must forgive his writing to her, because, though he did not know her, he had once had the pleasure of meeting her son. "He," said Mark Twain, "was driving in his coach of state to St. Paul's, and I was on the top of a 'bus." Many years later, when he returned to England in his glory, he was presented to King Edward who said that he was glad to meet him again. "Again, sir?" echoed Mark Twain. "Have you forgotten our first meeting?" asked the king. "I was in my coach of state, driving to St. Paul's, and you were on the top of a 'bus."

mer carried away the older friends, every autumn brought a new draft to take their place. With time came better rooms and perhaps greater dignity of position; a man worked through the lower offices of various clubs and succeeded in time to the chair; he woke to find himself a senior member of the college, setting to freshmen the tone which had been set to him in his own first year. With abrupt suddenness he discovered that he must begin looking for digs. out of college; if he had idled or overspent his allowance, he would perhaps retire to a distant monastic cell to retrench or work; otherwise he looked for good rooms near the House and a friend to share them with him.

Life out of college diminishes the sense that a man is a living, breathing part of a community which wakes to life in hall, common room and cathedral, if indeed it is not always awake in the quadrangle. So long as he is back in digs. by midnight, there are few restrictions on his liberty; he can entertain, he can get up and go to bed when he likes, he can see as much or as little of the college as he chooses. And, with comfortable digs., an excellent cook and work which swells like a banking cloud as his schools approach, there are many temptations to stay at home and only to visit the college for Sunday evening chapel, hall and a club meeting.

The last year, for those who find time to think, is depressing, for they are watching the O.U.D.S. or the House Grind for the last time, and the menace of their final schools throws a gloom over everything. Some of the subjects are being read for the first time; others, that seemed to have been mastered two years before, are now almost wholly forgotten; losing confidence, a man speaks of himself as "lucky to scrape a fourth," he

grows fatalistic and says that he does not care; and his tutor wisely sends him away for a few days' holiday and reestablishes his confidence with a word of praise.

Then for a week he faces his examiners, two papers a day, three hours for each paper; and at the end, when they have laid him bare, he cares very little indeed for any other result than that he will probably never again be compelled to study English political or constitutional history, political economy and economic history, political science and European history, a special subject or even a modern language. The taut nerves become of a sudden very slack.

And then it has to be realised that within a week all will be over.

One last Commemoration. A day or two of unbearable farewells. Instructions for the packing of books and pictures which he had unpacked so very lately, yet at the distant other end of his Oxford career. And then that overwhelming day when a man drives to the station and, as the train gathers speed, looks for the last time on Tom Tower. He will come back again, no doubt, but no longer as a resident undergraduate; the Kingdom of the Young has passed to another dynasty. In three or four years he has progressed, in age, from boy to man; but the development has been chiefly intellectual, and, for all his greater knowledge and experience, he has changed little in character or essential instincts. The rigour of school discipline has been relaxed, because it is no longer needed; but the simple school ideals of honour and loyalty, restraint and self-control, clean living and hard condition remain unaltered. Had he chosen to defy opinion and to disdain the protection with which Oxford surrounds him, the opportunity was

at hand for drinking too much and for getting into debt, for idling and for discarding the fastidiousness which impels English boys to keep women at a distance. There are men in every generation who will collect experience at all costs, but at Oxford they are not regarded with admiration: the undergraduate who drinks or boasts of his exploits with women is voted noxious or boring or both.

A month or six weeks after the end of term comes the *viva;* then the class lists. In the following October the curtain is rung down for most, when they meet again—and, perhaps, for the last time—to receive the grace of their college and to proceed to the degree of Bachelor of Arts.

CHAPTER IV

LONDON AND ELSEWHERE

". . . These homes, this valley spread below me here,
The rooks, the tilted stacks, the beasts in pen,
Have been the heartfelt things, past-speaking dear
To unknown generations of dead men,

Who, century after century, held these farms,
And, looking out to watch the changing sky,
Heard, as we heard, the rumours and alarms
Of war at hand and danger pressing nigh.

And knew, as we know, that the message meant
The breaking off of ties, the loss of friends,
Death, like a miser getting in his rent,
And no new stones laid where the trackway ends.

The harvest not yet won, the empty bin,
The friendly horses taken from the stalls,
The fallow on the hill not yet brought in,
The cracks unplastered in the leaking walls.

Yet heard the news, and went discouraged home,
And brooded by the fire with heavy mind,
With such dumb loving of the Berkshire loam
As breaks the dumb hearts of the English kind,

Then sadly rose and left the well-loved Downs,
And so by ship to sea, and knew no more
The fields of home, the byres, the market towns,
Nor the dear outline of the English shore,

But knew the misery of the soaking trench,
The freezing in the rigging, the despair
In the revolting second of the wrench
When the blind soul is flung upon the air,

And died (uncouthly, most) in foreign lands
For some idea but dimly understood
Of an English city never built by hands
Which love of England prompted and made good. . . ."

JOHN MASEFIELD: *August*, 1914.

I

WHATEVER the success of English public schools and universities in training the sons of the wealthier classes for their part in the professional and public life of the country, one result of an educational system which takes charge of a boy at seven or eight and releases him only at twenty-one or twenty-two is that he enters upon his adult life and work later than the young men of other countries, including those which impose a term of military service. As all but a negligible few in England have to earn their own livings and as several years of preparation are required before the barristers, doctors or solicitors are qualified to practise and before artists, politicians or men of business are of any use in their calling, the English also make their entry into public affairs later than other nations; they also marry later, but, as the climate of England does not necessitate early marriage for men, this influences the lives of the women more deeply and goes some way towards explaining the social and psychological position of girls who remain unmarried for some years after they are ripe for marriage.

While the value of general experience, gained in other parts of the world, may outweigh that of the technique, the atmosphere and the moods of parliament, gained from within, it is indisputable that most young men cannot enter the House of Commons even if they wish.[1] On leaving Oxford, those who had not to earn their living entered the army or returned to manage their estates; the politicians dispersed for the most part

[1] Lord Wolmer, the late W. G. C. Gladstone and the late Francis McLaren are the only exceptions that I recall in my own time.

to the Temple, to Fleet Street and to the City, there to forget that they were politicians until they had mastered the business of making themselves independent. And a few spent the whole or a part of the next years in acting as *aides-de-camp* to colonial governors or in travelling privately for the study of imperial and foreign conditions.

Those who remained in London and those who periodically returned thither in the five years before the war alike discovered that they were in a new imperial Rome in a new silver age. All who had waited for the passing of Victorianism were rewarded for their patience by finding a vacuum which they were free to fill in what way soever they chose; and to the task they brought unbounded energy, almost unbounded wealth, a vigorous dislike of restraint and an ingenuous ignorance of tradition. Never, in the recorded history of England, has the social power of money been greater; never has the pursuit of pleasure been more wide-spread and successful; never has the daily round of the educated and reflective, of the wealthy and influential, of the stolid and slow been brought nearer to the feverishness, the superficiality and the recklessness which characterized one section—but one only—of the French in the years immediately before the first revolution.

Until his receptivity and taste for mild excitement became blunted, a young bachelor, who found in London at this time an indefinite prolongation of his most careless and gregarious undergraduate mood, could contrive to divert himself with enviably little effort: one dance was, indeed, very like another, the only difference between two *débutantes* was that of name, and—like Disraeli's young exquisite—he might come to relish bad

wine as a relief from the monotony of excellence; but, before he grew jaded, there was nothing, save a substitute for his own attendance, with which his hostesses refused to provide him. Morning after morning, in those spacious years, brought to his bedside a thick pile of invitations; as he breakfasted and dressed, his telephone was only released by one anxious friend in order that another might use it; luncheons and dinners, theatres and operas, balls and week-end parties poured down upon him in promiscuous welcome. The enervating suspicion that he was achieving a personal triumph by being passed from house to house and from list to list was quickly dissipated when he recognised himself as one of six men whom his dinner hostess had pledged herself to bring; but his self-respect could always be restored by the reflection that, if his entertainers were solely concerned to collect so many male heads, he himself only wanted a place where he could smoke, dance and sup between the moment of leaving the theatre and the moment of going to bed. Every one was the gainer by his presence.

While the excess of demand over supply set a premium on young bachelors, it forced down the value of those who entertained them and drove entertaining to a lasting discount. In 1910, a few of the Victorians still left cards at the houses where they had dined; by 1914, the custom was suspect as a weak admission of thankfulness; and, when the gracious days of the great small courtesies were voted obsolete, an uncaring telephone invitation from the lips of a butler was inevitably met by an acceptance or a refusal as careless of even formal obligation. The despised prim decorum of Victorian social intercourse was replaced by head-hunting on the

one side and by moss-trooping on the other; and, as, in three years, there was more entertaining and less hospitality in London than in any other part of the world, so there was also less gratitude and more greed. The young girl with social gifts, and the young man without, were not only enabled but encouraged to live from Tuesday until Friday at the expense of those whom they would have disdained to call their friends; and the parasite had by no means exhausted the flow of hospitality when he bade farewell to his party in the early hours of Saturday morning. If he played golf, lawn-tennis and bridge, if he played any one of them, if—playing no games of any kind—he could satisfy his hostess that he would be content to slumber in the country for two nights and a day, he would receive more invitations than he could use.

II

In the engaging or tragic folly of the æsthetes, in the literary and artistic adventures of the nineties, in the blatancy and arrogance of the new imperialism, the death-knell of the Victorian age was sounded before the death of Queen Victoria. Between the end of the South African war and the outbreak of hostilities with Germany, there was time for the whole face of English social life to be changed.

There was time, and there was a will. English society, so defiant of definition, had hitherto been founded on an aggregate of families deriving their influence from landed estates and made sensible of their obligations by their territorial position. The original nucleus was gradually increased by recruits from among those who

made fortunes in commerce or rose to a commanding position in politics or the public services; but the new blood filtered in so sparingly that it was absorbed and transmuted by the old. The existing order was not threatened until the personality and power of those who clamoured without the gate exceeded the resistance of those who wilted within.

The balance of strength began to be reversed when one of the periodical waves of new riches coincided with a sharp depreciation in the old media of wealth: the industrial millionaire, the Rand magnate, the American heiress and the cosmopolitan Jew, hitherto suspect and shy, made a simultaneous appearance at a time when to the afflictions of agricultural depression was added the capital taxation of the Harcourt death duties. Welcomed by the most august and forced upon the most repellent, new and alien faces appeared at Cowes, on the turf and at Covent Garden; new names among the birthday honours and in the list of those who rented grouse-moors. Faced with the choice of marrying money or of economising and doing without it, the old aristocracy of land crossed its blood with the new aristocracy of commerce, hoping no doubt that the system by which isolated newcomers had been tamed would prevail to convert the barbarian host in companies and to baptise it in platoons. On either side lessons were given and received; but, while interest urged the stranger to acquire ready-made an air of breeding, the fading memory of a waning prestige could not preserve to the older society the abitrament in manners which it had held unchallenged before this surrender to wealth.

A few families resisted the lure and kept their doors straitly barred; but, as Dane-gelt, instead of buying

security for English soil, only tempted more Danes in search of more gold, so the first, partial capitulation brought more invaders with ever more and more gold to offer in exchange for a slice of England. As influence and importance were focussed on money and no longer on land, power shifted from the landed estates to London; the steadying responsibilities of a territorial position, which was already threatened by subversive democratic ideals, were allowed to dwindle.

By the end of the South African war London had become a cosmopolitan place of entertainment with more money, a greater zest for pleasure, a larger proportion of sycophants and a weaker control by any recognized group of social leaders than any other European capital. The first flood of Rand, Jewish, American and native commercial wealth, which had been at least in part unobtrusively absorbed, was followed by a second flood which English society was still too much saturated to take in; and for a dozen years the tottering sea-wall of society was buffeted by angry and uncontrolled waves of wealth. As the new rich of those days had abandoned one social sphere without establishing their position in another, their first task was to surround themselves with men and women who would accept their hospitality and mitigate their solitude; a few impoverished promoters furnished lists of eligible names; money and the amenities of the big hotels, which were then springing up in London, accomplished the rest. During those years there was on one side a steady stream of rich newcomers who asked only that their parties should be well attended; on the other, a stream no less steady of those who saw in this opportunity the finger of God.

A temporary check was imposed in 1910, when the

sudden death of King Edward plunged the country into mourning, but in 1911 London crowded two seasons into one. Perhaps there was a fear that the new reign would usher in simpler manners and a more austere way of life, perhaps the pleasure-loving, who had lived for a twelve-month, murmuring in undertones behind shuttered windows, grudged their days of abstinence. The coronation gave legitimate excuse for carnival; and in 1912 the fear of reaction merged into a resolve to postpone the reaction until carnival had spent itself: the resources of the new rich, not yet exhausted, began to seem inexhaustible; and every day, by unfitting the parasites for any other life, multiplied their number. By 1913 the lust for amusement had become constant and was whipped by a neurotic dread of anticlimax; by 1914 there was a panic feeling that this old order could not last. Already war had rumbled distantly since Agadir; twice in the Balkans the rumblings had given place to storms which suggested how the suffering and ruthlessness of twentieth-century fighting would transcend all that had been known before and had demonstrated how strong were the meshes which held all European diplomacy involved, how weak the paper safeguard of peace. The labour world had half risen in the great railway strike of 1911 and might any day rise in its full strength; Ireland was at the mercy of two lawless armies; and the government was powerless even to prevent a determined body of women, already opposed by overwhelming public opinion, from breaking windows and burning churches.

"How long, O Lord?" asked one.

"Après moi, le deluge; mais après le deluge . . .?" asked another.

And in the first week of August, 1914, the cynics who had been watching the growth of hostility between classes agreed that, if there had been no war, it would have been necessary to create one.

These were the mad, neurotic years of private horse-play and public lawlessness, when no hoax was too gigantic, no folly too laborious to be undertaken for a wager and when ill-conditioned defiance led every class in the land to proclaim that, if it disliked a law, it would disobey it. They were days of great costume-balls, of freak dinners and of nascent night-clubs. Perhaps they are best regarded as the years which, of all in recent times, the ingrained puritanism of the English would most gladly forget.

Under the shock of war it became fashionable to look upon this wanton life as an offence to God, which the scourge of God was being used to end; and from an audience whose heart is not yet healed the satirist of those years can always be sure of applause. It is easy to paint too glittering a picture and to foster a new sense of superiority which is not justified. For a dozen years before the war there was much ostentation and polite mendicancy, much frivolity of head and vulgarity of soul among a world of merrymakers who had been born without a feeling for responsibility or who had shaken off the restraints of tradition. Was their crime more grave than that?

Every vulgarian must be vulgar in his own way; so long as the institution of private property continues, rich and poor are equally free to misspend their money; and, though they differed in their means and in their tastes, rich and poor were equally guilty of waste, display, lawlessness and sloth; a just sumptuary law would

have borne as hardly on one as on the other. In the absence of a civic conscience, all struggled to obtain the maximum of personal enjoyment with the minimum of exertion, protesting self-righteously the while against the idleness and improvidence of their neighbours; and, if the poor murmured at the misuse of surplus wealth, the rich were sometimes amazed at their own moderation in not resenting the sight of so much leisure with so little taxation among the working classes.

While those who mocked at the primness and overthrew the decorum of the Victorian era constructed a social system which to Irish eyes seemed intolerably vulgar and mercenary, it may be pleaded that the new and alien arbiters of taste, lacking any tradition of breeding, could hardly be expected to know any better and that Providence would surely have made allowances for this before unloosing the scourge.

III

The breach between Victorianism and that which succeeded it was not more complete in manners than in art and literature. By the time that King George V ascended the throne, the great lights of the preceding century were, almost without exception, flickering out or already extinguished; those who survived the transition in time were none the less influenced so deeply by the change in atmosphere that their later work differs from the earlier as much as one man's from another's. This is so much more than the normal advance from youth to maturity that it suggests a revaluation, a new point of view and a reaction to changed psychological

conditions without. While Kipling's art as a supreme story-teller attained by natural development to a rarer perfection, his change of standpoint may be measured by the distance from any one of the *Plain Tales* to *They* or *The Brushwood Boy;* with Conrad the change is from *Nostromo* to *Chance;* with James from *The Wings of a Dove* to *The Awkward Age.*

The younger men, untrammelled by memories of what they had tried to express in a previous incarnation, worked with a freedom of which they only became conscious when they paused to compare it with the restrictions under which their predecessors laboured. It has been said that, in the early nineties, *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray* opened a new chapter in dramatic history; when it was reproduced a dozen years later, it hardly seemed, for all its skill and power, so daring as before; and, if it were reproduced again to-day after another dozen years, the younger critics would doubtless continue to praise its technique, but they might be unable to realise its psychology. In 1920 it is felt to be surprising that any one should bother when a man marries his mistress; that she should commit suicide when another old lover comes back into her life is inconceivable: to the modern playwright that is not a dramatic theme worthy of his mettle, to the modern English world that is not a problem to cause more than passing embarrassment to any one.

Whether England has become morally more lax or merely less reticent about its laxity is a problem which no one can solve; but the greatest change that has overtaken literature and art in the last twenty years is in the new freedom to choose any theme and to treat it by any method. The plays of Shaw and the novels of Wells

had embraced every subject from brothels and baldness to God and gunpowder-factories, from patent medicine and politics to love and linen-drapery. The form of the medium has changed as profoundly as the content; the play and the novel have been made an avowed platform for the dramatic or narrative discussion of any thesis that interests the author at any given moment.

This new emancipation has been accompanied by a new receptivity, welcome at first and only dangerous when criticism seeks to navigate without a compass; a new willingness to explore unfamiliar spaces and to experiment with new instruments. The twenty years which have passed since Queen Victoria's death have seen the literary birth, development or at least general recognition of a company so varied as Synge and Barker, Housman and Yeats, De Morgan and Galsworthy, Masefield and Rabindranath Tagore, to take but a few; it has seen translations of Russian novels and Chinese lyrics, of Belgian mystical essays and Scandinavian realistic plays; there is no form of literature, whatever its atmosphere and language, to which a hearing has been refused.

Nor is this merely an Athenian craving for something new. All—and perhaps more than all—that was worth rescuing of Oscar Wilde's perverse wit was restored to circulation as soon as the English had satisfied their love for a legal separation between art and morals; Samuel Butler was one of several to enjoy a posthumous vogue; and, if the other heroes were rearranged in the national pantheon, many were brought into prominence who had long languished in obscurity. This period saw an immense flood of cheap reprints issuing from a dozen different publishers; more experiments were tried on more

Shakespearean plays than ever before; and theatrical societies produced Elizabethan and Restoration dramas which had been left long unplayed.

These years were enriched by two repertory seasons at the Court and Duke of York's Theatres, in which some of the maturest work of Shaw and Barker, Galsworthy and Barrie was seen; and the Abbey Theatre company came annually from Dublin to delight new audiences with some of the greatest comedies, the greatest tragedy and the finest teamwork in acting that had been seen in London for a generation. As a rule, however, the stage was more fortunate in what it revived than in what it presented for the first time; dramatic literature has lagged so far behind other forms that playwrights would compose and managers produce what no conscientious novelist or self-respecting publisher dared to expose for sale. The level of acting, too, was no higher than might be expected in a country where actors and actresses "starred" on the strength of a single part and continued in one groove, with plays written down to them, because they had not endured the discipline of a diversified early training. To suggest that the English get the drama that they deserve would be unfair to a nation which, on the whole and with startling exceptions, enjoys and supports the rare good plays offered to it; yet there rests unexplained the mystery that, although the dramatic is the most lucrative form of writing, although managers and public were clamouring for plays, although the theatres were filled with erotic comedies, brain-saving revues, emasculated French farces, clattering American melodramas and perverse, senile sentimentalities, there were not in these years more than three

British playwrights who could be trusted to give a recognisable representation of life.

The mystery is deepened by the fact that, during the same period, the English, who accept with resignation if not with pride the stigma of being unmusical, crowded a life-time of musical progress into a few years. Covent Garden has always been a battleground between those who wish to hear the greatest number of the most interesting operas in their best rendering and those who find a box and the second half of a tuneful banality the best place and time for meeting again the friends whom they have not seen since dinner. For a generation the two armies existed amicably side by side on a compromise by which the music-lovers secured that, whatever the opera, it should be competently given and the others conceded that it might be competently given so long as no experiments or innovations were made. Year after year the hackneyed *Rigolettos* and *Lohengrins,* the *Traviatas* and *Tannhaüsers* soothed the conservative hearing of any one whose musical education had been arrested in childhood; from time to time the *Ring* was given, but the inordinate length of each part provided a plausible excuse for those who stayed at home, and a martyr's crown or at least a victor's laurel for those who attended.

Then, without warning, the new artistic receptivity spread to music, and a trial was offered to new men and to new works. *Der Rosenkavalier* and *Elektra* were given in those years; *Parsifal* was played for the first time in England; and all whose knowledge of ballet was limited to the Empire and Adeline Genée found themselves led to a mountain-top and invited to regard the new world wherein Pavlova and Mordken, Karsavina and Nijinski lorded it. With the Russian ballet and

under the shadow of war came the Russian opera; and, while the old repertory was played at Covent Garden, a new ecstacy was offered at Drury Lane by *Prince Igor, Boris Godounov* and *Ivan le terrible.* With the Russian opera came an artist whose admirers have not yet determined whether he is greater as a singer or as an actor, though they agree that as a combination of the two he is the greatest figure on any operatic stage in the world. The incomparable voice and superb presence of Chaliapin blew a new vigour of youth and a new conception of beauty into the stale dust of the London theatre.

Though the spirit of the emancipation breathed also on the graphic and the plastic arts, as yet its breath has produced only intoxication. For ten years one experiment has succeeded another, one school has hustled another out of the way; and the artists whom the public is enjoined to admire of a morning are devoured by their own children in the afternoon. Beyond a contempt for the academic and a revolt from the traditional—not always supported by technical proficiency in the method rejected—the impressionists and post-impressionists, the cubists, vorticists and dadaists have not made plain the goal of their exploration and as yet, though they have formulated new theories of art, they have not achieved a new beauty. As, in the reaction from Victorian stiffness, social emancipation led to a gilded hooliganism, so, in graphic art, the reaction from the strictness of the pre-Raphaelites led to chaotic lawlessness. If all England went mad for five years before the war, her madness is registered, though—it may be hoped—not immortalised, in the painting of the period.

IV

It was in these years of change and upheaval that the men of the vanished generation served their apprenticeship and came to first grips with life. Their fathers and grandfathers, seeing England riven by a new political dispensation, had acquiesced grudgingly in the transference of power without seeking to understand the aspirations of the newly emancipated millions and without striving to create a new and united community. The fact of social, economic and racial antagonism, impressed upon them as the legacy of the French revolution by a hundred years of riots, strikes and wars, came to be buttressed in the middle of the century by a biological doctrine which taught that antagonism of beast to beast and of man to man, of class to class and of creed to creed, of nation to nation and of hunger, cold and pestilence to all was an eternal and ineluctable decree of nature. It was easier to repeat half-comprehended phrases about a struggle for existence and the survival of the fittest than to attack the disorder which is the ineluctable and eternal result of antagonism.

After a hundred years of ill-will and dissension, a new generation arose to protest against the confusion of this endless antagonism. Impatience with disorder, hatred of ugliness and preoccupation with the government of man by man—a normal part of youth's mental equipment—were stimulated in the dawn of the twentieth century by the literary challenge of each year: in play after play Bernard Shaw was attacking some social abuse with the penetration of an old controversialist, the ferocity of a fanatic and the wit of an Irishman; in novel after novel H. G. Wells cried out on the slovenly think-

ing and spiritual laziness which barred beauty and order from life; and in play after play and novel after novel John Galsworthy pleaded for gentleness and explored with unanswerable questions the place where a civic conscience should have been. At no time since the days of the *philosophes* has literature been so much engrossed with the shortcomings of civilisation; at no time has it appealed so fervently nor experimented so widely. The waking dream of beauty was reinforced more than ever before by a sense of personal responsibility; and a higher proportion of the young men from twenty-two to twenty-seven were waiting only until they were equipped to undertake it. With a background of new ethical standards and of new political ideals, in an atmosphere of artistic experiment and of social revolt, amid a shifting social population and an unceasing redistribution of wealth, under the menace of war abroad and of revolution at home, they first measured their strength against the difficulties of the career that each had chosen.

Between 1909 and 1914 a few married; but, as the necessity for earning a living was their first concern in those days, the majority were for the present as much debarred from matrimony as from public life. A few went utterly to pieces, ranging in their downfall from the squalor of touting among their friends for insignificant loans to the supreme waste of suicide. One or two flashed meteorically to the highest plane of their professions. The rest followed an average course and in diplomacy or in the civil service, in the army or in holy orders, in commerce or at the bar, in medicine or in journalism worked with what patience they could muster through the unproductive years of early plodding. By 1914 the original fortunate three or four who had entered

public life as soon as they came down from Oxford were reinforced by a dozen more who had made enough progress in five years to fight an election or at least to nurse a constituency; and five years were long enough to enable the rest to decide whether they had made wise choice of a career. Some of those who had been called to the bar now abandoned their wearisome inactivity in order to make a livelihood in the City; the young soldiers who had been sent into the army to be kept out of mischief now assumed that they had reached years of discretion and resigned their commissions; and any one who had obstinately cherished the ambition of a literary life might well, after five years, be deemed incurable.

It was the fate characteristic of nearly all that generation that, as their training neared completion, they were called away for ever from the work for which they had been trained and lost to the peaceful service of mankind. By 1914 their seniors had completed their apprenticeship and made their transition; though their uprooting was greater, they had at least found for a moment their place in the uncaring void. The apprenticeship of their juniors had not yet begun: they passed from school or university to their war-service, and the survivors postponed until the end of the war their practical preparation for civic life. This is not to say that one is to be envied more than another; in every country at the outbreak of every war, one generation is more violently dislocated than the rest; when all loss of life is waste of a nation's resources, it may be felt that the most grievous waste is among those who have completed their scholastic education and prepared themselves for work which they can never fulfil. "Childhood makes the in-

strument, youth tunes the strings, and early manhood plays the melody." The vanished generation never played upon the instrument; it was hardly tuned before it was struck to the ground, and music of another kind was heard.

It is useless to speculate how much the loss has cost humanity; to the men in the middle twenties at least as much as to the men of any age it was left to pay for the madness of the world and the crimes of its rulers. They were at the summit of their physical condition; their spirit and training carried them unfalteringly into the war; and, enrolling themselves in the first days, they supported the chief burden of a game in which the odds lengthened against them with every hour of immunity. A strange marching-song sent them to their death: strident and shrill cries of impatience with everything, revolt against everything; catches of crooning waltz and clattering rag-time to bring back memories and to twist hearts; the craving for excitement and the whimper of fretfulness; the sigh of a world in despair heard in the silent pause of mankind bewildered; all blended their notes to a thunder of confusion, banishing thought. The onlookers cried in rival tumult that this, at all events, would be the last war in history; and an echo of their consoling philosophy carried to the departing troops and, in the belief that this was a war to end war, furnished them at last with a ready explanation of their going.

A few perhaps wondered why war could only be ended by war and whether this was indeed the last war; hardly any one risked the odium of penetrating official propaganda in order to enquire why war had been made possible, though some liberals searched their hearts to

discover how the historic peace-party of Great Britain, elected on other issues and periodically fed on professions of good-will, had been persuaded in a day to honour, by payment in flesh and blood, international obligations whose existence the government had more than once denied.

CHAPTER V

THE FRINGE OF POLITICS

"It makes all the difference in the world whether we put Truth in the first place or in the second place."

WHATELEY (quoted by Lord Morley in *Compromise*).

I

THOUGH by the outbreak of war, their progress towards the House of Commons had brought but few of the younger politicians to a constituency and fewer still to a contested election, a great part of the years from 1909 until 1914 was inevitably taken up by political studies in a highly-charged atmosphere. The controversies of that time were waged with a bitterness of which the straitest recluse could not remain unaware; and the unsated passions of Westminster were carried to Pall Mall and fed to new inspiration in the adjoining, ever-open temples of the two great parties.

The Reform Club, own sister to Bridgewater House, standing between the Travellers' and the Carlton, is the home constructed by Sir Charles Barry for the supporters of the reform act of 1832 and for their successors. A necessary qualification for membership is that the candidate shall be a "reformer", though the rules do not indicate whether it is sufficient for him to support the reform of the divorce law or of the tariff; and until 1886 a reformer and a liberal were synonymous. After the home rule split of that year, the Gladstonians in this

as in every liberal club blackballed a Hartingtonite candidate, the Hartingtonites blackballed a Gladstonian candidate, and both combined to blackball an uncertain candidate till a truce had to be declared if the club was to survive. In the head-quarters of the liberal party, so loveless a union was doomed to a short life; when incompatibility of temper passed beyond patience and hope, judgement was given for the home rulers; and, though a few of the unionists kept their names on the books, the majority of the seceders drew daily closer to the conservative party, and the club once more became the head-quarters of liberalism.

So it has remained to this day; and the chief party meetings, such as that in December 1916 when Mr. Asquith announced to his followers the resignation of the first coalition, take place within its walls; though mercifully free from the control of the party whips, it is still to liberalism very much what the Carlton is to conservatism; a liberal member of Parliament takes precedence of other candidates in the order of election; and the only problem that can now perplex the club is the old question, "What is a liberal?" and the new rider, "Who is leader of the liberal party?"

It was not to be expected that the conditions of life in even the oldest and most famous clubs could escape the social revolution which was observable before the war and which the war accelerated. For several years before 1914 the peculiar glory of club life in London was coming to be regarded as one of London's departed glories: the parsimonious father no longer automatically entered his infant son's name for five or six clubs, the impatient candidate was no longer content to linger indefinitely in the upper reaches of a waiting-list, and

the growing absence of restraint in all social relationships broke out into intolerance of the crusted conservatism to which young members of other days had submitted uncomplainingly. The war, in checking the normal flow of fresh blood, caused some clubs to waste and die, others to turn a more anæmic scrutiny on the qualifications of their candidates; and, with the coming of peace, the cry has again been heard that even the most historic institutions must modernize themselves or forfeit the allegiance of those who require a place where they can play squash racquets and invite women to meals. It is so doubtful whether club life will ever regain its Victorian popularity and prestige that a student of changing manners may perhaps be forgiven for halting to uncover at the sound of one more passing bell.

As the nebulous quality of being a reformer is the sole positive requirement of a candidate for the Reform Club, the membership is more varied than in most. Naturally, liberal politicians abound; the bar and civil service are well represented, but probably no association which is primarily political contains also quite so many non-political elements. From the days of Thackeray and James Payn to those of H. G. Wells and Arnold Bennett it has always bound a spell on men of letters: Henry James had a bedroom there in his later years; and novelists, whether or no they can boast the honour of membership, alike seem unable to keep it out of their novels. Jules Verne laid the first and last scenes of *Round the World in Eighty Days* in the card-room of the club, and it is chastening for a vegetarian to reflect that in those virile days your reformer breakfasted succulently off steaks and chops; it is impossible not to suspect more than one sly description in some of H. G.

Wells' later novels, while in *Marriage*—beyond doubt or cavil—one character leaves the ice and idealism of Labrador, if not for the flesh-pots of the Reform Club, at least with the knowledge that "pressed beef, such as they'll give you at the Reform, too, that's good eating for a man. With chutnee, and then old cheese to follow . . ."

From a corner of the Reform Club young political aspirants had an unrivalled opportunity of watching for ten years the history of liberalism in the making. With hardly an exception the ministers were all members; and most of them used the club regularly. The great liberal triumph of 1906 had brought everything but homogeneity: there was enthusiasm, authority and numbers, but there was also suspicion and a memory of old feuds. The Liberal Leaguers, it was generally believed, would have liked to banish Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman to the House of Lords; but both he and his backing of nonconformist radicals were too strong for them. On his resignation the liberal party presented the anomalous spectacle of a radical, peace-loving, nonconformist body with a Liberal League head; and the first election of 1910 was required to unify the party. In the cabinet and in the House of Commons there is a difference, almost incomprehensible to those outside, between the position of a prime minister who has succeeded to the heritage won by another and the position of a prime minister who has gone into action at the head of his army and has been invoked and acclaimed in five hundred single combats. Though he had squandered the vast majority which Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman bequeathed to him, Mr. Asquith returned in 1910 with

enhanced prestige as the leader of a party which had gone to the polls in his name.

The years from 1906 until 1910—the "Mad Parliament" [1]—had been primarily a time of political education or disillusion for the liberals who entered the House of Commons with unlimited idealism, limited experience and unbounded ignorance of parliamentary forms. In the first flush of victory they cleared the Rand of its indentured Chinese labour and carried out the settlement of South Africa by a grant of self-government: to such an avalanche of power the opposition could offer no resistance, and, so long as the government effected its reforms by executive action, the reserve of the old guard could not be brought up. It was when, with a curiously negative passion for reversal, ministers tried to upset the Taff Vale judgement and the Balfour education and licensing acts that new legislation was needed; and to new legislation the conservatives could offer an opposition to overcome the most bloated of majorities. The Birrell education bill and the new licensing bill were destroyed by the House of Lords; the trades disputes bill, after hanging by the neck, was cut down before it was dead. Of the three, this was the one most open to attack in that it placed trades unions, in some respects, above the law; it was allowed to pass, amid salvos of abuse, because the House of Lords would not then risk a direct challenge to organized labour; and this cynical opportunism discredited the Lords far more than had their partial and reactionary assault on all bills submitted by a liberal government.

Either of these rebuffs constituted, in the eyes of the party stalwarts, an occasion for war; and those who re-

[1] The phrase is borrowed from my friend, Walter Roch.

membered the dismal policy of "filling up the cup" in the Gladstone-Rosebery administration yearned for a short, sharp contest in which the malevolence of the House of Lords should be fettered for all time. Nevertheless, the memory of even a successful election is so little alluring that the liberal majority of those days did not wish to engage in a second: the politician of detached judgement surmised that, when the Nationalists had secured special favours for Catholics and when all parties had united to concede them to the Jews, it was invidious to refuse similar treatment to the Church of England. In rejecting the education bill, the House of Lords aroused little practical hostility, however much its action may have offended doctrinaire democrats; and so artificial was the tattered passion aroused by the Balfour education act of 1902 that, when it ceased to furnish platform capital, it was left to function unmolested and is still operative after nearly twenty years. Similarly, when the licensing bill was thrown out, the House of Lords was so far from being reprobated by any but prohibitionists and professional partisans that it even won the sympathy of the average man by preventing an intolerable interference with his personal habits and by securing to the threatened license-holder his means of living. Some such reflections, occurring even to the less detached politicians, disposed them to wait for a more certain triumph than was promised by the half-hearted support accorded to their rejected bills; an opportunity was provided by the budget of 1909; and Mr. Asquith's first general election of 1910 was fought to reaffirm the hitherto long unquestioned control of finance by the House of Commons.

If the new liberal majority was smaller and now de-

pendent on the nationalist vote, it was at least inspired by an unanalytical admiration for its chief such as no prime minister had enjoyed since the fanatical personality of Mr. Gladstone drew an equally fanatical devotion from his followers. Personal shyness and intellectual aloofness deprived Mr. Asquith of the love felt for Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman by all who came in contact with him; he never pretended passionate enthusiasms nor roused in others the passionate enthusiasm which caused Mr. Lloyd George to be cheered through a division-lobby; he was never the sole hero of a great bill as Mr. Lloyd George was the sole hero of the 1909 budget; outside the House he never won the adoration of the proletariat as Mr. Lloyd George won—and to some extent kept—it by his Limehouse campaign; and, when fire was needed in debate, Mr. Lloyd George or Mr. Churchill was left to supply it. Nevertheless, lack of temperament and limitation of heart were compensated, in Mr. Asquith, by the unlimited ascendancy of his head. Eloquent, emphatic, and unruffled, patient, experienced and resourceful, the intellectual and dialectical superior of the oldest parliamentarian in the House and the wisest tactician on either side, a survivor from Mr. Gladstone's last cabinet and Mr. Gladstone's most brilliant discovery, Mr. Asquith exacted, even from those who resisted him in the Liberal League days, a blind loyalty which carried him through four years of the hottest and most unintermittent domestic fighting in English political history; it carried him, with closed ranks, into the war and through nearly two and a half years of the war, though many felt in their hearts that, by the policy which made war possible, he had betrayed liberalism and that, by the unheralded formation and dissolution of the

first coalition, he had betrayed the liberal party. After the December crisis of 1916 the loyalty of his followers, with their English love for an old, popular favourite, insisted that he should still remain at their head; and, when he lost his seat in 1918, he retained his leadership. The general election in that year extinguished his party; it was characteristic of the men he led and of the leader they followed that, when all was lost but faith, they set loyalty to their old chief above private and public interest.

II

From the budget crisis of 1909 until the party crisis of 1916 Mr. Asquith, as the Nestor first of his party and then of his coalition, was by so much the most commanding figure in public life that posterity seemed likely, in reading the history of those years, to concentrate upon his name as exclusively as this age concentrates on that of Mr. Pitt, while forgetting the names of his lieutenants as completely as the casual reader in these days has forgotten the names of Mr. Pitt's. Had he remained in office till the armistice to enjoy the fruits of this early war-administration, his fame would probably have transcended Mr. Pitt's, as the late war transcended in magnitude the war against Napoleon; had he resigned voluntarily, with every honour that could be bestowed upon him, three months before the December downfall, he would have shared with his successor whatever credit history may accord to the political leaders in the war. The time and the manner of his resignation dwarf his personality and his achieve-

ments before those of Mr. Lloyd George as the achievements and personality of Lord Aberdeen were dwarfed before those of Lord Palmerston. "Nothing in Mr. Asquith's career is more striking than his fall from power," writes the anonymous author of *The Mirrors of Downing Street;* "it was as if a pin had dropped."

Seven years earlier he seemed to his supporters, inside the House and out, a leader who could wrest a party victory from the jaws of political death. Whoever unloosed the winds, it was always Mr. Asquith who harnessed and rode them. Thus, Mr. Lloyd George, confident that the House of Lords had, by constitutional convention, no power to tamper with a money-bill, departed so far from the traditional conception of the budget as a means of balancing expenditure and revenue that the House of Lords was threatened with loss of control over any measure which could be shielded by a financial clause. It was a bold challenge, boldly accepted; the House of Lords threw out the budget. No general election could paralyse their powers more completely than the device which the chancellor of the exchequer was seeking to introduce. With equal boldness the prime minister followed up his challenge by advising a dissolution.

Mr. Asquith's ministry was returned to power with authority to piece together and carry its mutilated programme, though the authority was by now so much diminished that the opposition regarded itself and the country as lying at the mercy of a small and tyrannous junto: had they voted by inclination, the nationalists would have assailed the budget, but they gave their support as a consideration for the later help of British liberals who indeed called themselves home rulers, but were

more interested in other issues. From 1910 onwards log-rolling by groups became the first condition of the government's existence; and, before ever the House met, the whips' office was conscious of the change. Political history from 1910 to 1914 is the record of the government's attempts to meet its liabilities. The great bills were introduced: home rule, Welsh disestablishment and electoral reform; they were rejected, and the parliament bill was drafted to secure that these and other bills, when passed by the House of Commons without change in three consecutive sessions, automatically became law. There was another election, keenly resented by those who regarded it as unnecessary and complained that they had been misled by the prime minister's Albert Hall speech; and Mr. Asquith was empowered to say that, if the House of Lords rejected the parliament bill, new peers would be created until the government had a majority; the bill passed.

After less than ten years, many are forgetting the political passions of those days. To a radical this contest was far the greatest democratic victory since the first reform bill, and Mr. Asquith, after nearly twenty years, seemed to be buckling on the sword which Mr. Gladstone laid down when, in the last speech delivered by him in the House of Commons, he warned his party of the conflict which had been forced upon them: to an Irishman, it was the promise of freedom and self-government. Nowhere could there be found room for compromise, though the opposition saw only the coming of mob-rule and confiscation, the betrayal of Ulster and the spoliation of the church. It is small wonder if war was carried to the knife and fork, if old friendships broke, as in the days of the first home rule bill, and if

stern, unbending tories stalked disgustedly from drawing-rooms when ministers and their families entered.

Many, too, are forgetting how closely fought was the contest. Blood, it was boasted, would flow under Westminster Bridge before the "backwoodsmen" gave way; the whips' office was reported to have its lists ready, and new peers were to be created in batches until their opponents abandoned the futile opposition; while the final debate was taking place in the House of Lords, the first commissioner was at work on the plans for converting Westminster Hall into a chamber capable of seating the new creations. No one, even as the last division took place, could predict confidently how the votes would be cast.

The victory of the government brought to an end the greatest constitutional struggle of a century. Henceforward the will of the majority, expressed through its representatives in the House of Commons and thrice affirmed, could no longer be withstood by the House of Lords in its existing or in any reformed state; for the second time in twenty years Ireland looked through an open door at the vision of freedom. It may be that the war, in overturning all political conditions, has caused the parliament act to be no longer needed: the days of conflict between the two houses may have passed away in 1914, and from the present disorder and sorrow of Ireland may emerge a settlement not less enduring than was foreshadowed in the third home rule bill; but, whether or not there be one to mourn its death, all must recognise that the parliament act is dead, and, unless its fruits are to be secured by other means, it were better that it had never been born with its promise of hope and its fulfilment of despair. If war with Germany was

inevitable—an hypothesis which increasing numbers find themselves unable to accept—democracy and nationalism would have fared better by its coming in 1911; if the act of God had displaced the liberal ministers on the morrow of their victory, it would have been better for their reputation and for the principles which they professed. For a moment they and their redoubtable leader loomed big as any of the greatest parliamentary figures in history; neither Canning nor Grey, neither Palmerston nor Gladstone could shew a fairer record of achievement in the long battle for democracy and the untrammelled development of small nations.

It was only for a moment. Political history from the passing of the parliament act is the history of liberalism in its decline and fall. Were ministers exhausted by their effort? Were they men who could only do a piece of work when it was forced upon them? Among his great qualities it is doubtful whether the prime minister could include enthusiasm, though he worked in office with the mechanical efficiency and speed of a hard-pressed barrister; it is certain that he could not be credited with imagination: the Irish ideal and the Ulster ideal floated at an equal distance above the practical head of a man who had been taught and trained to distrust enthusiasm and to reject idealism. His biographer may search through his speeches and writings for one hint of vision or a single glimmer of sympathy with anything but material logic; he might as profitably search through the sole published speech of Gallio and the comment of his chronicler. Want of vision was temporarily compensated by adroitness in escaping the consequences of this defect. For the next five years, friends and enemies agreed that there was no one to equal Mr. Asquith

in his tactical retreat from a crisis; the enemies added that, until a crisis arose, he never exerted himself; the friends began to wonder whether the highest statesmanship consisted in overcoming one crisis by creating another, by exchanging an Irish crisis for a European crisis until, in the final crisis of December 1916, when for the last time he bade his followers choose between Nicias and Cleon, a majority voted for any change from the long and precarious policy of brilliant improvisations.

As an instrument of government, the liberal ministry declined in power as its prestige declined; and its prestige suffered a severe blow on the day when the public was informed that Mr. Lloyd George, the chancellor of the exchequer, Sir Rufus Isaacs, the attorney-general, and the Master of Elibank, chief liberal whip, had been buying American Marconi shares. The attorney-general's brother was associated with the English company; and the more credulous section of the public, never reluctant to learn or to invent a scandal among the highly-placed, jumped to the conclusion that ministers with access to information withheld from the public had been speculating in stocks which their official position enabled them to influence in their own favour. A widespread outcry arose, a commission of enquiry was set up, ministers were examined and the findings of the commissioners were published. As a cynic observed at the time:

"The tories don't care a damn, but they have to pretend to be shocked; the liberals are shocked, but they have to pretend not to care a damn."

After weeks of excited recrimination, public interest gradually cooled; the hostile press had to admit that there had been no corruption, however injudiciously the

ministers had behaved. The episode might have been forgotten, the prestige of the government might have recovered if a concession had been made to the virtuous indignation of those who were shocked by the "scandal" and of those who persuaded themselves that they were shocked; no prime minister is strong enough to despise with impunity the suspicion that, because he cannot afford to lose them, or because he is indifferent to their offence, he is retaining colleagues for whose resignation he should have asked. Too lofty of soul to regard the prejudices of the vulgar and perhaps reluctant to present Mr. Lloyd George to the labour party or to the radical wing of the ministerialists, the government listened only to the dictates of logic and loyalty: if the three ministers were innocent of dishonest purpose or practice, they must not be persecuted; indiscretion was not a hanging offence. The Master of Elibank soon afterwards abandoned political life to take up, as Lord Murray of Elibank, a responsible position with a firm of contractors; Sir Rufus Isaacs left the House of Commons to become lord chief justice; Mr. Lloyd George remained guardian of the public purse; and the less punctilious governments of the world from Mexico to France warmed to a feeling of cordial fellowship with methods which they seemed to recognise and with men whom they seemed to understand.

This obedience to the findings of the commission was strictly logical; and in refusing to be swayed by ignorant prejudice the prime minister gave one more instance of his unfailing loyalty to colleagues who, it cannot be said too often, were innocent of all dishonesty. Nevertheless, in the mouths of weaker men there lingered an unpleasant taste; and, if no one was seriously

surprised or hurt by the conduct of the principals, even the most cynical member of parliament was offended by the unprotesting tolerance of such men as Mr. Asquith and Sir Edward Grey, of whom a more inflexible standard was expected. It was felt that, when a speculating chancellor of the exchequer continued in office, it must be because his chief was insensible to the undesirability of such practises, or because he was too sensible of his lieutenant's value as a vote-catcher; it was regretfully surmised that the prime minister would throw a protecting mantle over his colleagues, whatever they did, and that his colleagues could do what they liked because the head of the government would never call for their resignation.

The sense that the prime minister would only stir himself to use his authority in a crisis encouraged a spirit of lawlessness which in the years following led to active disorder and the threat of civil war; secure in the belief that they were too valuable to be dismissed and free from fear that the head of the government would call them to order, his less temperate colleagues were stimulated to a license of speech and to an independence of action that threatened the solidity of cabinet rule and prepared the rift which ultimately broke the party. These were the days when the blood of Marlborough, warming in Mr. Winston Churchill's veins, urged him to take personal part in a military campaign against a couple of hooligans in the east end of London; they were the days of Mr. Lloyd George's more finished Limehouse manner. And, while it is fair to assume that the prime minister's intellectual fastidiousness recoiled from this exuberance of action and speech, he did nothing to dissociate himself from it publicly.

The same lethargy brooded over the beginning of every new crisis. In addition to a long succession of labour troubles, occasionally composed at the eleventh hour, but usually flourishing to the general discomfort of the community at the thirteenth, ministers, in their lofty refusal to be stampeded, allowed two incipient rebellions against public order to reach a point of success and determination at which one could put a pistol to the head of the government and the other could demonstrate that the executive lacked power to quell unruliness. During these years the agitation in favour of female suffrage is only of interest in so far as it encouraged the enemies of England in their belief that the strength of the government was paralysed. The parliamentary vote has now been conceded to women; Mr. Asquith, its most stalwart antagonist, has seen that he mistook a prejudice for a principle and has repaired his mistake. In the three years before the war, however, he was not yet so well convinced of women's fitness to govern that he would allow female suffrage to become a line of party division. The suffragettes spoke and stormed, burnt and broke; their adherents in the House of Commons were not numerous enough to force a bill through; and the government was amply justified in not lending support to a cause which had no certain popular backing in the country.[1] But, if the time was not yet ripe for a parliamentary contest, the executive had at least a duty in maintaining public order. The weakness displayed by ministers in handling this series

[1] The parliament which ultimately conceded the vote was substantially the same that had refused it in 1913; its "mandate" was still primarily for the parliament bill and the bills covered by that; but the war changed, with other things, the responsibility of a member to his constituents and the new franchise was granted by men with no more authority to grant it than to abolish the monarchy or to make marriage compulsory.

of sporadic rebellions suggested to other discontented parties in England, Ireland and Germany that ministers were powerless to govern; a critic with any detachment wondered, in spite of himself, why the English fancied that they had any genius for self-government.

III

Salvation by violence, never a healthy doctrine to inculcate, was peculiarly dangerous teaching for a section of the Irish who had been told for almost thirty years that they would be justified in offering forcible resistance to any attempt on the part of the imperial parliament to press home rule upon them. When ministers honoured their obligation to the nationalist party by whose votes they had been kept in office since 1910, the Orangemen announced that they would resist by force. Cynics in England may have been amused, seekers after truth outside England must have been shocked to find the Irish "loyalists" [1] threatening armed resistance to an act which could only come into force on the authority of the king of Great Britain and Ireland and of the imperial parliament; if not shocked, even the avowed anarchist must have been surprised to find the experiment in constructive treason blessed and headed by the Right Honourable Sir Edward Carson, K.C., M.P., one time a law-officer of the crown and a man committed by his privy councillor's oath to loyalty towards his soveran. But these were restless and unbal-

[1] The name applied to themselves by members of a party which is Scottish in origin and which has, in the course of history, repudiated its allegiance to the Catholic Church and the Stuart dynasty and threatened to repudiate its allegiance to the Hanoverian dynasty.

anced times, in which constitutionalism came to be regarded as an outworn shibboleth: the bitter struggle over the 1909 budget, the two general elections within a single year and the more bitter struggle over the parliament bill had familiarized the people of Great Britain with a new violence of language, of boast and of threat. The Ulster covenant and the Ulster volunteers, appealing to the twin boyish love—in such men as Mr. F. E. Smith, K.C., M.P.—of a secret society and of playing at soldiers, afforded a new thrill to jaded spirits who were perhaps disappointed that, though the parliament bill had passed, no blood had flowed under Westminster Bridge.

Behind Sir Edward Carson stood a young Englishman in a hurry and a Canadian, no longer young, who had been entrusted with the delicate task of teaching the conservative party a newer and better style of parliamentary opposition than Mr. Balfour had been able to inculcate; the Irish problem united the three indissolubly, and for present violence and later responsibility there is little to choose between them.

"I could contribute," said Mr. F. E. Smith on 18.6.12, "very little to the military efficiency of those who were resisting the Regular Forces or the still more formidable invasion from the South, *but* . . ."

"I can imagine," said Mr. Bonar Law, on 27.7.12, "no length of resistance to which Ulster will go which I shall not be ready to support."

"We will shortly challenge the Government," said Sir Edward Carson on the same day. "They may tell us if they like that this is treason. We are prepared to take the consequences."

"I do not care tuppence whether it is treason or not," proclaimed Sir Edward Carson on 21.9.12.

"Supposing," Mr. F. E. Smith suggested on 25.9.12, "the Government gave such an order, the consequences can only be described in the words of Mr. Bonar Law, when he said, 'if they did so it would not be a matter of argument, but the population of London would lynch you on the lamp-posts.' "

"The Attorney-General," boasted Sir Edward Carson, himself an old solicitor-general and a future attorney-general, on 11.10.12, "says that my doctrines and the course I am taking lead to anarchy. Does he not think I know that?"

"If you attempt to enforce this Bill . . . ," threatened Mr. Bonar Law on 1.1.13, "I shall assist them in resisting it."

"We will set up a Government," announced Sir Edward Carson on 7.9.13. "I am told it will be illegal. Of course it will. Drilling is illegal . . . the Government dare not interfere."

"Ulster will do well to resist, and we will support her in her resistance to the end," promised Mr. Bonar Law on 28.11.13.

"The red blood will flow," prophesied Sir Edward Carson on 17.1.14.

"To coerce Ulster . . . no right to ask army to undertake," decided Mr. Bonar Law. "Any officer who refuses is only doing his duty."

"The day I shall like best," said Sir Edward Carson on 20.6.14, less than six weeks before the beginning of war with Germany, "is the day upon which I am compelled, if I am compelled, to tell my men, 'You must mobilize.' "

"If the occasion arises," Mr. Bonar Law undertook on 28.9.14, eight weeks after war had broken out, "we shall support you to the last in any steps which Sir Edward Carson and your leaders think it necessary for you to take." [1]

While the leader of the unionist party, a former solicitor-general and the rising hope of the spent and broken tories were restrained from using language that could be borrowed by malcontents less highly placed, their followers imposed less check on the unaffected poetry of their natures.

"There is a spirit spreading abroad," declared Captain Craig (*Morning Post,* 9.1.11 [2]), "which I can testify to from my personal knowledge that Germany and the German Emperor would be preferred to the rule of John Redmond, Patrick Ford and the Molly Maguires."

"If they were put out of the Union . . . ," proclaimed Major F. Crawford, a Larne gun-runner, on 29.4.12, "he would infinitely prefer to change his allegiance right over to the Emperor of Germany or any one else who had got a proper and stable government."

And even Mr. Bonar Law ventured to state, even in the House of Commons, on 1.1.13:

"It is a fact which I do not think any one who knows anything about Ireland will deny, that these people in the North-East of Ireland, from old prejudices perhaps more than from anything else, from the whole of their past history, would prefer, I believe, to accept the government of a foreign country rather than submit to be governed by hon. gentlemen below the gangway."

[1] These quotations are taken from Mr. Hugh Martin's *Ireland in Insurrection.*

[2] This and the following quotations are taken from *The Complete Grammar of Anarchy* compiled by Mr. J. J. Horgan.

"It may not be known to the rank and file of Unionists," announced *The Irish Churchman* on 14.11.13, "that we have the offer of aid from a powerful continental monarch who, if Home Rule is forced on the Protestants of Ireland, is prepared to send an army sufficient to release England of any further trouble in Ireland by attaching it to his dominion, believing, as he does, that if our king breaks his coronation oath by signing the Home Rule Bill he will, by so doing, have forfeited his claim to rule Ireland. And should our king sign the Home Rule Bill, the Protestants of Ireland will welcome this continental deliverer as their forefathers, under similar circumstances, did once before."

Since the consequences of their menace have been observed in the desolation of a hundred million homes throughout the world, Orangemen have not dwelt with pride on this aspect of their campaign; and, even at the time when the last threat was uttered, the more temperate souls felt that the controversy was being pushed beyond the limit of fair government-baiting. Weapons of an older type were brought into play: Ulstermen, who of all dour, independent races can best look after themselves, were depicted as the future spiritual and financial victims of "Rome rule"; and of the plea that Ulster only wished to remain a part of Great Britain and Ireland much was made by controversialists who would not consent to be governed for a day, had the tables been turned, by an insignificant minority of Ulster nationalists, backed by political sympathizers in another country.

With the thunder of opposing oratory mingled the rattle of grounding arms and the tramp of marching feet; but, though the Orangemen warned the government that the Ulster rebels were too much in earnest to

be disregarded, ministers were by now grown indifferent to the bluff of their enemies, the counsel of the disinterested and the public insults which highly-placed ladies showered upon them with impunity at court and in private houses. Whether the anarchy and treason, preached and admitted by Sir Edward Carson, would ever have flamed into civil war is a matter of guess-work. The nationalist leaders, rightly or wrongly, thought that it would not; the prime minister who afterwards discounted the strength of nationalist idealism from August, 1914, until the Easter rising was unlikely to give its true value, whatever that might be, to the strength of unionist idealism two years before; by now, moreover, he was too well used to actual crises to be alarmed by a crisis which had not yet arisen. Mr. Birrell, the chief secretary, was too busily engaged in concealing his defects as an administrator under his brilliance as an epigrammatist to supply the imagination that his leader lacked. No attempt was made to scotch the rebellion or bring the ringleaders to book; enrolment increased, drilling continued, arms were purchased and imported. In the spring of 1914 some uneasiness made itself felt in the bosom of Colonel Seely, the secretary of state for war, and a confidential question directed to the loyalty of the troops stationed at the Curragh elicited that a number of officers, holding the king's commission, would refuse to obey orders if commanded to proceed against the Ulster rebels.

Though it was still a matter of guess-work whether the Orangemen would rise, no one could doubt that, in the event of a rising, there would be difficulty in making the army obey its orders. No less a person than the leader of the opposition had said that the officer who

refused would only be doing his duty. For a few hours the House of Commons tried heatedly to assert itself against this attempt to establish a military ascendancy over parliament; the tail wagged and came near to lashing the dog; but the creation of a crisis created with it an opportunity for the prime minister to shew his adroitness in overcoming crises; Colonel Seely resigned, and Mr. Asquith undertook the administration of the War Office, thereby surprising the Curragh and the House of Commons so completely that the revolts in both places flickered out. The government, however, had only escaped from one difficulty by plunging into a greater; ministers, at last realising that Ulster must be coerced or conciliated and that Sir Edward Carson, relying on his volunteers, was pressing them harder than Mr. Redmond, who could only rely on a government's honour, decided to conciliate. It was announced that the home rule scheme must be amended; a conference was summoned; the Orangemen were comforted by a promise that the home rule act would not be enforced without an amending act; and ministers committed themselves to a formula which has become an accession-oath to succeeding administrations: Ulster must not be coerced. To a liberal, the idea of coercion is so hateful that he welcomes any declaration which undertakes to circumscribe its tyranny; if it has to be applied, he would sooner see one man in bonds and three at large than one at large and three in bonds; but the liberal loathing of oppression, as expressed by Mr. Asquith and Mr. Lloyd George, seems to have been confined to onehalf of one province of Ireland. To the tortured and distracted other three provinces their process of thought has never been satisfactorily explained.

In the venerable story of an international gathering which was set to write an essay on the elephant, it will be remembered that, while the Englishman wrote on "Elephant-Hunting" and the Frenchman on "The Love-Affairs of the Elephant", it was a German who evolved an elephant out of his inner consciousness and a Pole who devoted himself to "The Elephant in Relation to the Polish Question." For a subject-nation to be obsessed by concern for its nationality is perhaps tiresome to others; not to be so obsessed is despicable; and the Irishman and the Pole have at least escaped the degradation of a deracialised Jew. None the less, though nationality be the first, it is not the only concern; and even an Irishman may have felt, during these years, that Irish independence was being purchased at the cost of a liberalism that was not confined by national bounds. Political science has changed so little in two thousand years that, whatever the origin of the state, it now exists primarily, as it existed in the days of Aristotle, to make life possible: the personal safety of the individual must be assured and he must be guaranteed the essentials of living. On this foundation there rises now, as in the days of Aristotle, the second law, which alone separates an assembly of men from a pack of wolves, that the state exists to make possible a life of excellence; the individual must be afforded a chance of living a nobler life. Despite sporadic crime and external war, the first condition of safety was satisfied in England; and, though death by starvation was not unknown, the existence of work-houses testified that none need starve. Because the second condition is still so far from being fulfilled and because the chance of living a noble life is confined to an infinitesimal handful of the population, a party pledged to social reform

came into existence and will justify its existence so long as oppression or fear of oppression, injustice, insecurity, disease, ignorance, poverty and squalor remain to be removed. It was the business of liberalism to remove these handicaps.

How far did it succeed? The violence of political controversy in those days hid from most observers how little was being done to improve the lot of man, woman or child in England. After the passion for reversing the legislation of their predecessors had run its course, ministers did indeed carry a courageous measure of old-age pensions; their insurance act was generous in intention even if it was unneeded and ineffectual in practise; and the parliament act created a procedure for expediting social reform in the future. But how much else did they find time to achieve in the intervals of the constitutional crisis and of the unending clash over Ireland?

While they wrangled, the possibility of a noble life was brought no nearer. Hundreds of thousands were insufficiently fed, ill-clad and verminous, with insufficient air, light and warmth; millions were corrupt with phthisis, cancer or venereal disease. On these physical wrecks and starvelings education left little mark; and a century of labour combination and industrial legislation had not laid that spectre of unemployment which stunts the soul and turns cold the heart of even the healthiest and most independent when they live within sight of the margin of subsistence. Day after day the opportunity of noble living was withdrawn from the thousands of women who through moral weakness, poverty, indolence or greed were pressed as recruits to prostitution; it was withdrawn from the homes that were ruined by drink and gambling. The shadow cast

by the cloud-capped towers and gorgeous palaces of modern civilisation was so dense that there still existed in England, in the twentieth century, private societies to preserve animals and children from being tortured.

From time to time a sudden attack was made on the trade in human bodies and souls known by timid English euphemism as "the white-slave traffic"; the criminal law was amended and made more vigorous; the defencelessness of children was recognised and safeguarded. For what they were worth, let all credit be given to these gingerly attempts to heal unsightly sores, provided that no one mistake part cure for complete prevention. A prison flogging may deter the pander from dealing in human flesh, but it does not dispose him to noble living for its own sake; this is begotten of a sense of beauty by education. During these years a cartoon by Max Beerbohm depicted Lord Lansdowne trying, with all the amenity of his kind, to understand just what Mr. H. G. Wells meant by the barrenness of official politics; the successive education bills of the liberal administration sacrificed the elementals of good citizenship to an ingenious game of protecting church of England children from the perils of religious instruction in the tenets of dissent; and whether in after life a man starved his children or lived on the hire of his wife's body mattered less than that for the first twelve years of existence a unitarian should be secured from believing or even understanding that God was Three-in-One and One-in-Three.

While only those who are equally ignorant of politics and of history imagine that the party system can be ended without a change in all the practises of English representative government, it is unquestionable that the sometimes artificial antagonism of two parties set

eternally in opposition to each other causes undue importance to be attached to politics on their tactical side; the content is sacrificed to the form. If man's hope of noble living went unstrengthened in the years from 1906 to 1914, this was because the trustees of the nation were too busy squabbling for possession of the machine.

IV

Throughout July, 1914, all parties were working industriously to amend the home rule bill in such a way as to compensate the "ascendancy" party for the loss of its ascendancy. That solution had not been discovered when war broke out. To present a united front in face of the enemy, Lord Lansdowne and Mr. Bonar Law patriotically promised the prime minister their support in this latest crisis; the prime minister, not to be outdone in patriotism, undertook to postpone controversial legislation for the duration of the war. The contentious bills were left to hibernate in the statute-book; the constitutionalists in Ireland were left to compare the failure of constitutionalism with the success of treason; and the political historian observed that, once more, the major crisis had saved the government from the consequences of the minor.

Unhappily, as controversial legislation was only postponed, so the consequences of this surrender to rebellion were only postponed; more unhappily still, they were not postponed for so long. Certain lessons were learned in the years from 1911 to 1914; and they have not been forgotten.

First, the government, as the suffragettes and

Orangemen had shewn, could be bullied; it either would not or could not keep order. And for more than two years it was bullied by strikers, conscriptionists, "war groups", newspaper proprietors and those who wished for a coalition; it was bullied in open session and in secret session by private members, ex-ministers and commissions of enquiry.

Secondly, officers of the British army could refuse to obey orders if commanded to suppress a political agitation with which they might sympathise; it was not made clear by the army council that privates had the same freedom if commanded to suppress a labour agitation with which they might sympathise.

Thirdly, a privy councillor might, with impunity, preach armed resistance to a law, though the result of his preaching were local bloodshed or a general war; Sir Roger Casement might not practice armed resistance in protest against the suspension of that law.

Fourthly, the word of a British minister could no longer be accepted. A political bargain is as binding as any other; and since 1910 the government had depended on nationalist support of which the price was the home rule bill. When pressure was applied, the government refused to honour its bargain; payment was to be made on new conditions and in debased coinage. It is instructive to read the list of those who acquiesced in this surrender, for the dishonour of the prime minister was shared by all of his colleagues and supporters who consented to the act of betrayal: they are English, Irish, Scotch, Welsh, Jewish and hybrid, so that the disgrace is not confined to a single nationality; they are men who probably pay their tradesmen, certainly their opponents at bridge. And many of them made eloquent speeches

of righteous indignation when the Imperial German government abrogated the Belgian and Luxemburg treaties. In Ireland to this day and for many years to come there is not a man, woman or child who will take the British government seriously. For defence it is urged that, if the home rule act had been enforced in 1914, there would have been civil war in Ulster; temporary peace was bought at the price of civil war throughout the rest of Ireland from the Easter rising onwards, as the rest of Ireland learned from British ministers and from Sir Edward Carson that "the great questions of the time are to be decided not by speeches and votes of majorities but by blood and iron." Faced with this choice of evils, it was unfortunate that ministers selected the alternative which carried with it the repudiation of their own bond.

As the unconstructive critic is no less irritating and no more helpful than a howling child, the Irish policy of the liberal government may only be attacked by those who are prepared to suggest an alternative. The present first essential is that the imperial parliament should reestablish in Ireland a belief in its own good-faith; the second, that, as nationalist history has advanced rapidly since 1914, the Irish should be given a measure of independence relatively as great as that promised to them in the third home rule act; the third, that they should determine its form for themselves. All Ireland should be divided into electoral areas to choose a constituent assembly which would contain Ulster Protestants, Ulster Catholics, Southern Protestants, Southern Catholics and Sinn Feiners (who can enter no conference so long as there is a price on their heads). When a two-thirds majority of this constituent assembly has agreed upon a

constitution, the imperial parliament should undertake to enforce it, if necessary by arms, whatever its form and without favour for any recalcitrants; and every section of parliament should pledge itself, jointly and severally, to this. The minds of those who are disturbed by talk of an Irish republic may be soothed if the word "commonwealth," sufficiently honoured in other parts of the world, be substituted. Those who see in Ireland a base of attack on England in a future war are not entitled to be heard until they have stated (1) what war they anticipate; (2) where Ireland is to find the money to build a fleet or to equip an army, and (3) how, in any war, Ireland is more immune from the supervision of the British navy than are France, Belgium and Holland.

Until Ireland has been pacified, the reciprocal murdering and incendiarism of this new Thirty Years' War will continue, at the lowest, to hinder succeeding governments in their task of reconstruction after the war, as the unsettled Irish problem hindered the task of social amelioration which had been entrusted to the liberal government in 1906. Month by month, as the shadow of Ireland advanced farther into British politics, the authority and usefulness of a great reforming party receded; and, at the end, the bruised, the broken-hearted and the disillusionised agreed that, if the liberal ministry which the genius of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman had contrived and which the biggest liberal majority in history supported so long and faithfully could have been caught up to heaven on the morrow of the parliament act, every liberal would have said: *"Felix opportunitate mortis."*

The outbreak of war marked the death of liberalism. Freedom of speech was curtailed and suppressed until

one scrupulous patriot asked in the House of Commons whether the Sermon on the Mount should not be regarded as subversive of military discipline; freedom of action was drowned by a wave of collective hysteria in which governors and governed vied with one another to impose new burdens and to bend submissive and welcoming necks to receive them. The theory of representative government, shaken to its foundations when a House of Commons which had been elected to carry the parliament bill engaged—as a parergon—in a European war, was finally destroyed when conscription was imposed without election or referendum. The lusty growth of autocracy soon choked such sickly flowers of liberalism as a care for the rights of minorities and a concern for the pleadings of conscience; though a moment's reflection would have shewn that, if Christianity is persistently thrust down the throats of all English children, a few will almost certainly accept it literally, those who looked for no qualifications to the injunction that a man must not kill were quickly taught that Christianity was not a practicable creed for times of war; and a country which prided itself on a traditional love of fair play first reviled and then persecuted conscientious objectors with so little discrimination that, when one Quaker who had acted as a stretcher-bearer received the Mons medal, he could only wear it in the prison to which he had been confined for refusing to undertake military service.

Whenever, in the first two years of the war, an article of liberal faith came in conflict with the heterogeneous policy of a coalition government, the article of faith was thrust aside. The resolutions of the Paris economic conference committed Great Britain to a tariff war with her enemies; the treaty of London converted a war which

had been undertaken to satisfy British obligations to Belgium into an imperialist war in which the present and future allies of Great Britain were invited to help themselves at the expense of their neighbours; gradually there was heard less talk of a crusade on behalf of small nationalities, and the liberal party committed itself to a "knock-out blow". So committed, it could neither utter nor listen to proposals which involved less than unconditional surrender; and, though Belgian neutrality might perhaps have been vindicated and reparation secured before the war had run half its ultimate course, the imperialist policy in which liberalism acquiesced allowed of no check to hostilities until Europe was exhausted and revolution had been unloosed in Russia, to spread no man knows whither. The peace party in English politics finally assented to a settlement of which any militarist in France or Prussia would have been proud to acknowledge the authorship.

It was not to be expected that any set of political principles could remain unchanged by war, though liberalism would have been less violently mutilated if it had appealed to the heart rather than to the head of liberal leaders. How far their foreign policy contributed to the war which destroyed liberalism must be discussed later.

CHAPTER VI

ON THE EVE

Τῶνδε δὲ ὄυτε πλούτον τις τὴν ἔτι ἀπόλαυσιν προτιμήσας ἐμαλακίσθη οὔτε πενίας ἐλπίδι, ὡς κἂν ἔτι διαφυγὼν αοτὴν πλουτήσειεν, ἀναβολὴν τοῦ δεινοῦ ἐποιήσατο. Τὴν δὲ τῶυ ἐναντίων τιμωρίαν ποθεινοτέραν αὐτῶν λαβόντες καὶ κινδύνωυ ἅμα τόνδε κάλλιστον νομίσαντες ἐβουλήθησαν μετ, αὐτοῦ τοὺς μὲν τιμωρεῖσθαι, τὼν δε ἐφιεσθαι, ἐλπίδι μὲν τὸ ἀφανὲς τοῦ κατορθώσειν επιτρέψαντες, ἔργῳ δὲ περὶ τοῦ ἤδη ὁρωμόνου σφίσιν αυτοῖς ἀξιοῦντες πεποιθέναι, καὶ ἐν αὐτῷ τῶ ἀμύνεσθαι καὶ παθεῖν μᾶλλον ἡγησάμενοι ἢ [τὸ] ἐνδόντες σώζεσθαι, τὸ μὲν αἴσχρὸν τοῦ λόγου ἔφυγον, τὸ δ' ἔργον τῷ σώματι ὑπέμειναν καὶ δι, ἐλαχιστου καιροῦ τύχης ἅμα ἀκμῇ τῆς δόξης μᾶλλον ἢ τοῦ δέους ἀπηλλάγησαν.

Thucydides, II.42.

I

IN choosing the late summer of 1914 for the "inevitable war", which, to the eyes of Bernhardi and of his school, was to lead ultimately either to "world-power" or "downfall", the German great general staff chose the moment when its own organisation was most efficient and when its adversaries were jointly and severally less well able or inclined to accept the challenge than at any time since the Anglo-French *entente*. At home, the Kiel Canal had been reconstructed and the western strategic railways completed; abroad, Russia, with her slow, cumbrous mobilisation, could be left out of account for three weeks; and three weeks was thought sufficient to crumple up an army which the French, true till death to their policy of giving everything to their

country but the money in their pockets, had neglected to equip. Politically, too, France was distracted by one of her periodical Caillaux scandals.

There remained Great Britain; and, if the French were uncertain of armed support until the first units of the expeditionary force landed, the German general staff may be excused for thinking that the expeditionary force would never embark. For months it was believed at the German Embassy in London that England was faced with volcanic labour disturbances; Sir Edward Carson and Lady Londonderry on one side, Mr. Asquith and Mr. Birrell on the other had brought Ireland to the brink of civil war; and a government which could not restrain unruly women from breaking windows and burning churches was not an efficient machine for waging a war in which the last ounce of ability and determination would tip the balance. Never, since the day when the triple *entente* first loomed in the delirium of German statecraft as an aggressive encircling movement in diplomacy, had it seemed flimsier and more vulnerable to the first shock of the "inevitable" war.

This, as will be seen later, is not to hold the German government solely responsible for the war nor to admit that war was inevitable. The ancestral voices of the Chauvinists who in 1914 took most credit for their prescience in prophesying war might have been stilled by the reflection that from the Fashoda incident to the Lansdowne *entente* they had predicted a no less inevitable war with France, as, a generation earlier, they had predicted one with Russia; the good-will, moreover, which Great Britain for half-a-dozen years before the war extended to Russia and France had its exact counterpart in the former good-will which obtained when

Lord Salisbury presented Heligoland to Germany and when, earlier, English sympathy was on the side of Prussia in the war of 1870. No war is inevitable until it breaks out, if then; and successful diplomacy in effect and in intention is the history of inevitable wars which have never taken place.

By 1914, as indeed in 1911, the blundering of four Foreign Offices had produced a state of tension in which war was very difficult to avoid; but the phrase-fed population which repeated in solemn tones that Germany had "been preparing for this war for forty years" seemed never to enquire why the war had not been fought by instalments (as, all were told, Germany would assuredly do if Great Britain did not play her part in 1914) and why the first attack had not been launched in 1905 when Russia was exhausted by her struggle with Japan in Manchuria and distracted at home by revolution and experiments in constitution-making. So she might have rid herself for many years of the Russian menace; and, if France had been drawn in, it is inconceivable that so early as 1906 Great Britain would have been drawn in too. The reconstruction of the Kiel Canal was therefore unimportant; and, for an occasion of war, nothing less flimsy than the assassination of an archduke was ever necessary. And archdukes were plentiful. That Germany did not provoke a conflict in 1905 suggests that she had not in fact devoted forty years to preparing for a world-war and, further, that in that year she did not regard a war of any kind as inevitable. By 1914 her view of world-politics had swung round; and, if other nations contributed to bring war nearer, Germany must bear full and sole responsibility for provoking it.

What had happened between 1905 and 1914 to bring about this change of heart? Now that the war is at last over and truth is no longer disguised or concealed for the purposes of propaganda, now too that every nation of the world is wondering what benefit any one has secured by nearly five years of unequalled sacrifice and suffering, it is interesting to examine why this war should have been considered inevitable. It is more than interesting, it is vital; for the horrors of war are being forgotten even by those who suffered most from them, and, in a few years' time, another government of men who are themselves over military age may see, with one eye, the "necessity" of war and, with the other, its romance or glory, as, before 1914, the youth and age of England alike saw chiefly the "romance" of the Napoleonic wars without remembering the brutality of the press-gang, the nightmare tortures of field surgery unaided by anæsthetics and antiseptics, the calculated atrocities of the Peninsular campaign and the unromantic, hideous reality of killing and maiming at all times. If the war was inevitable, someone should surely have benefited by it materially. Belgium, a pawn on the board of inevitability, has been dragged from the conflict of the great powers and restored for a few years at least to the number of small nations; and all who went to the succour of Belgium may feel that they risked the world to gain their own souls. Nevertheless, if Belgian neutrality was indeed but the occasion of a war which the great powers could no longer avoid and if no one of them is richer, stronger, safer, healthier or happier, it would have been better not to undertake it; and, before any have time to forget, all should take steps to make other wars impossible.

Yet not even this boon has been secured. Since 1914 mankind has gained the creed of the league of nations, which is reverently mumbled with as much conviction as would be exhibited by a well-bred agnostic who found himself shepherded to church and discovered his neighbours mumbling the apostles' creed. The league of nations has been accepted with the blithe vagueness of a man who proclaims that he "believes in progress and all that sort of thing." M. Clemenceau accepted it, with the reservation that it must not remove the foot of France from the neck of her adversary; President Wilson accepted it, with the reservation that he could not bring pressure to bear on Congress if Congress refused to take a hand in policing the world; Mr. Lloyd George accepted it, with the reservation that the work of the league was to be entrusted indefinitely to the supreme council of the allies.

It would be foolish to disparage a machine which is being deliberately kept from functioning by a number of men too suspicious or too lustful of power to give the fly-wheel its preliminary spin: if that international duelling which men call war is to be stamped out as, a hundred years ago, duelling between individuals was stamped out in England, every nation must make a vast preliminary sacrifice by surrendering the right of private vengeance and aggression, as the individual perforce surrendered his private right to punish an enemy or to protect his own honour at the sword-point; there must no more be reservations in arbitration between states than there are reservations to the English law under which aggressor and aggrieved submit their case, even where it involve their fortune and honour, to the judgement of an impartial court. Want of courage or

of honesty has kept most champions of the league [1] from admitting, still more from insisting on, this repugnant idea of sacrifice; the league remains an abstraction; and already there is talk of an "inevitable" war between the United States and Japan, "inevitable" rivalry in ship-building between Great Britain and the United States.

Much is to be hoped from sane historical education; but, whatever contribution the League of Nations may make to the peace of the world, the first preparatory lesson, which no one as yet should have had time to forget, is that every modern war is a complex which includes "men disembowelled by guns five miles away" and that a war between several of the great powers, conducted with modern methods of destruction, is one in which no one, probably, gains anything. The second lesson is that, as the late war struck at combatants and noncombatants, neutrals and belligerents impartially if not with the same force, involving German women and children in the starving grip of the allied blockade and spattering the walls of English coast-towns with the brains and blood of British women and children slaughtered in some naval bombardment or air-raid, so any future war, with its call for the last resources of the nation, will convert into belligerents and potential victims the old men who are left to till the fields and the boys who stand at a lathe, the girls who fill a shell-case and the mothers who suckle future soldiers: all are providing the sinews of war; and the sinews of war have to be cut without too nice concern for age or sex. The third lesson is that there is no inherent, life-and-death antagonism between a Stettin dock-hand and a Bristol dock-hand, between a London physician and a Berlin physi-

[1] But not Viscount Grey.

cian, between Professor Gilbert Murray and Professor von Willamowitz-Moellendorff. So, at least, one school would be inclined to assert; and, if the assertion hold truth, it was no less true in 1914. Why, then, was this unnecessary war, which has impoverished the world in everything but bravery and suffering, considered necessary?

There was much ill intention, it may be submitted; more ignorance; and bad faith most of all. Russia and Germany stood, like every autocracy, to gain by a successful blood-bath; the triumph of a "spirited foreign policy" deflected attention from domestic politics and strengthened the bonds of discipline. France nurtured a spirit of hatred and revenge against the power which had after many years curtailed her privilege of exploiting and disturbing the German states for her own profit; she hankered, also, to recover two provinces which had been torn from her side as ruthlessly as she had torn them from the side of another. So much for ill intention.

There was ignorance in the epidemic of international fear which arose and spread from the day in 1892 when Germany made overtures of friendship to Great Britain. Before the government of the day had time to promulgate its historic doctrine of insularity, France was overtaken by panic at the possibility of being encircled; to counter an Anglo-German alliance which never came to birth, she purchased the alliance of Russia by financing the trans-Siberian railway and acquired at second-hand an interest in the thieves' kitchen of south-east Europe and a responsibility for its periodical conflagration. It was now Germany's turn to suspect an encircling movement directed at her immense double frontier; the uneasy suspicion turned to active alarm when the pacific

geniality of King Edward and the cautious diplomacy of Lord Lansdowne added the resources of the world's greatest naval power to those of the world's most numerous and of Europe's most scientific armies.

In such an atmosphere of suspicion, the "race of armaments" progressed apace and was fostered by an economic hallucination that, if Great Britain or Germany could destroy the other's trade, the survivor would be roughly twice as rich—with the embarrassing richness of a seller who brings his goods to a market where no one has anything to offer him in exchange. In brief sun-bursts of sanity, the manipulators of British foreign policy sickened of the suspicion-disease which themselves had spread; there were "peace talks" and peace missions: Mr. Churchill proposed a naval holiday; Lord Haldane visited Germany, flitting between Potsdam and Windsor, from one soveran to another, with a pregnant gravity and consequence that would have turned the head of a man less prone to personal vanity. By this time, unfortunately, the suspicion was too deep-seated to be charmed away by the bilingual fluency of a philosophic chancellor; the offer of a naval holiday, by a power which was already predominant at sea, suggested some kind of confidence trick; and the German government not only believed that an attack was impending, but knew well that, if the parts had been reversed, a boat-load of German Churchills and Haldanes would have been sent with messages of good-will to England. And no one outside the ranks of labour had proclaimed the simple doctrine that the Nürnberg toy-maker had no inherent, life-and-death quarrel with the toy-maker of Birmingham. So much for ignorance.

II

In England at least there was also bad faith.

A new chapter in British foreign policy began with the Anglo-French *entente:* designed originally to end a long period of friction in North Africa, it effectually ended the longer period of British isolation from continental politics. So successful was its work as an instrument of peace that a similar *entente* was established with Russia; and, as soon as London and Paris had disposed of North Africa, London and Petersburg turned their attention to unsettled problems in Persia. It was speciously claimed that the *entente* principle reduced the menace of war: henceforth all international differences could be accommodated by friendly chats between the foreign ministers of *entente* powers; if Germany would join the happy family, the menace of war would vanish.

Those who sincerely hoped to see growing from the first *entente* an informal United States of Europe revealed one blind spot in their imagination. The object of war, seen from one angle, is to upset the existing order in the interests of one belligerent; the object of the *entente* was to preserve the existing order; but, though this brought substantial advantage to Great Britain, France and Russia by putting North Africa and Persia out of bounds for diplomatic skirmishing, it brought no corresponding advantage to a country which joined the *entente* after the spoils had been divided. "You have helped yourselves," the German imperialist might fairly say; "you not only refuse to let me participate, but you wish me to guarantee you in permanent possession."

The German government refused to recognise the right of three nations to distribute among themselves the unallocated territories of the world; it presumed, further, to doubt their power; and the Agadir episode was an experiment to test the strength of the *entente*. A mailed fist and shining armour had prevailed against Russia when Bosnia and Herzegovina were annexed; they were worth trying again.

The international crisis of 1911 proved that, *on this occasion and on this subject,* Great Britain and France were not to be intimidated; here, at least, the *entente* was impregnable. Would it always be as solid? Throughout Europe, after 1911, the dominating question in foreign politics was whether the diplomacy of Great Britain and of France could always count on the armed backing of the other. Was there an offensive and defensive alliance? In the absence of an alliance, was there a binding obligation on either power to come to the assistance of the other?

The question was asked in the House of Commons:

"There is a very general belief," said Lord Hugh Cecil, on March 10th, 1913, "that this country is under an obligation, not a treaty obligation, but an obligation arising owing to an assurance given by the Ministry, in the course of diplomatic negotiations, to send a very large armed force out of this country to operate in Europe. That is the general belief."

To this Mr. Asquith replied:

"I ought to say that is not true."

A fortnight later he amplified his assurance by stating that this country was not under any obligation, not public and known to parliament, which compelled it to take part in any war. In other words, if war arose be-

tween European powers, there were no unpublished agreements, which would restrict or hamper the freedom of the government, or of parliament, to decide whether or not Great Britain should participate in a war. The use that would be made of the naval and military forces, if the government and parliament decided to take part in any war was, for obvious reasons, not a matter about which public statements could be made.

If the House of Commons had received any assurance less unequivocal, it is more than possible that the ministerial party would have split and that the government would have fallen. Though heavily reduced in numbers, the liberal majority was identical in spirit with that which had been returned to support Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman; it was strongly radical, straitly nonconformist and essentially pacific, knowing little of history and nothing of foreign policy, neither understanding nor liking continental adventures and occasionally resisting vehemently a quarter-comprehended drifting which demonstrably absorbed in armaments a revenue which might have been devoted to social reform. It disliked Mr. Churchill's activities at the Admiralty, it distrusted the liberal-imperialist elements which had risen to the top of the cabinet in the persons of Mr. Asquith, Sir Edward Grey and Lord Haldane; it had no quarrel with any one and, if its fears had not been lulled by the prime minister's explicit assurances, it would have taken steps to dissipate that danger of a European war in which Great Britain began to be involved on the day when she involved herself in continental politics. If the "obligation of honour," disclosed in 1914, had been made public any time in the three years preceding, if the government had fallen, if the commons of Great Britain

had shewn themselves to the pacific minorities and majorities in every country of Europe as backing their peace-talk with deeds, there would have been reality in the professions of the foreign secretary; the naval holiday and Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman's hopes for proportional disarmament might have had a hearing.

Perhaps there would have been no war.

When there was no obligation to participate, there was no cause for uneasiness. It was not until August Bank Holiday, 1914, that the House of Commons and the country discovered that "no obligation" was the same as "an obligation of honour." Sir Edward Grey, in guiding the House to war, used the words:

"For many years we have had a long-standing friendship with France . . . how far that friendship entails . . . an obligation, let every man look into his own heart, and his own feelings, and construe the extent of the obligation for himself."

There was no "obligation," as stated by Mr. Asquith; there was "a debt of honour," as implied by Sir Edward Grey. "I ought to say that is not true," Mr. Asquith had replied in reference to an alleged "assurance given by the Ministry, in the course of diplomatic negotiations, to send a very large armed force out of this country to operate in Europe"; yet, to judge from another passage in Sir Edward Grey's same speech, there was so much telepathic harmony between the naval staffs of Great Britain and France that the French fleet had already withdrawn to protect their joint trade routes in the Mediterranean and was leaving the northern and western coast of France to the hypothetical protection of the British navy. An Irishman, unversed in the niceties of parliamentary good faith, has to pause for thought.

Bishop Thirlwall, when challenged to say whether he did not prefer compulsory religion to no religion at all, is reported to have confessed that the difference was too subtile for his comprehension; any one of sensitive conscience must confess that his comprehension is not subtile enough to detect any other difference between an "obligation" and a "debt of honour" than that the debt of honour, unbacked by such sanction as is purchasable by a sixpenny contract-stamp, is the more strongly binding. Because there had been no exchange of signed notes, it is arguable that Mr. Asquith was justified by legal training and usage in denying that an obligation existed; Sir Edward Grey appealed to the chivalry of the House of Commons and defied it to say that there existed no obligation of honour.

Chivalry was stronger than resentment; the pacific majority, which, in its innocence of legalism, had kept the government in power on the assurance that no continental commitments existed, voted the country into war on the assurance that its honour was involved. It only remains to put on record the impression left by this hazy obligation on the mind of one party to it:

"We had a compact with France," said Mr. Lloyd George in August, 1918, "that, if she were wantonly attacked, the United Kingdom would go to her support."

In reply to an objection he added:

"There was no compact as to what force we should bring into the arena. In any discussion that ever took place, either in this country or outside, there was no idea that we should ever be able to supply a greater force than six divisions."

Later still he borrowed the qualifying language of

predecessors who had tried to keep faith with France and Great Britain at the same time:

"I think," he said, "the word 'compact' was too strong for use in that connection. In my judgement it was an obligation of honour. . . ."

So much for bad faith. The people of England, apart from occasional panics and blood-lusts, are justified in claiming that they did not want war; misled—and it is hard to refrain from adding "wilfully misled"—by their rulers, they were given no chance of preserving peace.

The public, which was left to pay the bill, is unlikely to know for many years how many members of the government shared with the prime minister and the foreign secretary the responsibility of misleading the House of Commons and the country. It is fair to assume that the terms of this compact, which was not an obligation, but only a debt of honour, were divulged to Lord Haldane before he carried out his peace mission to Potsdam; and to so consistent a champion of peace, of retrenchment on armaments and of social reform as Mr. Lloyd George, before he lectured Germany in his Mansion House speech during the Agadir crisis of 1911; and to Mr. Churchill, before he changed in a night from a "little-navy" man to a "big-navy" man; and to any one else who, like Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. Churchill, forced the cabinet door to see what manner of skeleton lay behind. It is equally fair to assume that the smaller fry of the ministry were not admitted to the guilty secret; nothing but ignorance could justify so egregious a speech as that in which one member informed the public that "he could conceive no circumstance in which continental operations would not be a crime against the people of this country."

From Agadir to Armageddon, those who believed in the word of the government believed also that nothing in the international position of those days could involve Great Britain in a continental war. Sir Edward Grey's adroitness and love of peace had steered Europe through a Moroccan crisis and two Balkan wars; when Austria hurled her bullying ultimatum at Servia, it was hoped that his intervention would again be successful and that, whatever the foreign ministers might achieve, the world would not commit suicide in revenge for the assassination of an Austrian archduke.

No one troubled; no one, surely, had reason to trouble. London in 1914 was an exaggerated caricature of London in 1913 or 1912. The carnival moved with the inconsequent speed and false recklessness of a *revue*. Of the thousands who besieged every railway-station on the last Friday of July, bound for all parts of England and for every kind of holiday, few can have fancied that it was their last holiday in a world at peace.

III

An average group, assembling at Paddington, found the train service disorganised by a minor strike and whiled away its time of idleness enforced by exchanging news of the Buckingham Palace conference and of the menace to peace in south-eastern Europe. One of the party had been lunching with the Pilgrims and retailed a rumour that there had been a slight run on the Bank of England that morning; this was in the early days of rumours, and all listened respectfully, though it was difficult to see why English depositors should be alarmed

at the Balkan imbroglio. Another of the party enlivened the journey by exhibiting new maps of Servia and south-east Austria, but, once away from the neurosis of London, no one was interested in anything but the threatened civil war in Ireland.

Any one who asked perfunctorily for news of Servia was assured that she would yield to superior force at the last moment. Though a journalist might whisper confidentially that the fleet had sailed from Portsmouth with coal stacked on deck, this was very far from making war unavoidable: if Servia refused to comply with the terms of the ultimatum, Russia would indeed come to her protection against Austria; but then Germany would come to the aid of Austria against Russia, while France would hasten to help Russia against Germany. The same automatic widening of the conflict had been threatened when Austria annexed Bosnia and Herzegovina; but, as it was then recognised that one great power would bring in another, so it would be recognised now and prevented; as Great Britain could not face a European war for Bosnia, so she could not now face it for Servia.

Similar conversations were taking place at that hour in thousands of similar houses. Few of all who took part in these last meetings imagined that within a few days they would be training for commissions; no one dreamed that, before a year had passed, almost every man at all these tables would have entered the army, that some would be wounded, others already killed. To most, a general war only became conceivable two days later, when the Sunday newspapers reported that German troops had crossed the frontiers of France and Luxemburg.

Thereafter, more quickly than dazed minds could take

in, the impossible became the actual. On Monday, though Kuhlmann's efforts to localise the conflict brought a moment's hope, letters and telegrams, flying from one part of the country to another, convinced even the most sanguine that war—in which Great Britain would be involved—was inevitable; and, before nightfall, every town and village was ringing with Sir Edward Grey's speech.

"How far that friendship entails . . . an obligation, let every man look into his own heart, and his own feelings, and construe the extent of the obligation for himself. . . ."

The thousands who had scattered four days earlier to every part of England poured back, on a common impulse, to London. There, all felt, they would gain readier news, perhaps better news, when the silence and isolation of the country had become unbearable. They assembled at hundreds of country stations, debating to the last whether the peace-trained navy would stand the test of war; and, as they read the morning papers, they found that the full text of the foreign secretary's speech made war a certainty, unless Germany submitted to a diplomatic rebuff more disastrously humiliating than the worst defeat in the field.

London that afternoon lay at the mercy of the first war-expositors. Those who had most vehemently attacked the 1909 ship-building programme now most loudly thanked God that England was an island protected by a strong fleet; a few railed against the earlier course of a foreign policy which had embroiled Great Britain in continental rivalries; no one at that time or in that place suggested that war could be averted. When the major issues had been discussed, confidences were

exchanged about the ministers who had resigned and wobbled and withdrawn their resignations. Lord Morley and Mr. John Burns had left the cabinet, followed by a small number of minor office-holders; Lord Beauchamp and others, who had refused to support a war for which the sanction of the country had been neither obtained nor sought, renewed their allegiance to the government when the neutrality of Belgium, which Great Britain was bound by treaty to defend, was violated; but the champions of peace, who had vowed that British troops should only leave England over their dead bodies, and the opponents of intervention, who had explained to wavering colleagues that Great Britain was under no international obligation to take part, remained snugly if silently in office. The fleet, it was now heard, had been ordered to take up war-stations and to seal the German forces in port before the ultimatum was issued; the expeditionary force, it was also heard, had received at least preliminary mobilization-orders while war hung yet in the balance; and so quickly do moral standards decline when personal security is threatened that those who had attacked Germany for her too timely massing of troops congratulated themselves that in England also there were men of laudable vigilance and decision.

And, like punctuation-marks at the end of every sentence, came interruptions from men torn out of familiar surroundings and flung into a world whose very language they did not understand:

"They say there will be a run on the banks for gold . . . ," murmured one.

"They say the Government will have to declare a moratorium . . . ," murmured another.

"They say there will very likely be bread riots. . . ."

"They say that special constables are to be enrolled. . . ."

"They say you ought to lay in a certain amount of food. . . ."

At eleven o'clock at night a state of war began between Great Britain and Germany.

IV

From the moment when the ultimatum took effect until the day when the first reports of military activity reached England, political speculation and prophecy raged unconfined. In the betting-book of one club stands recorded a wager that, in the event of war, there will within ten years be not one crowned head in Europe. Now that war had come, every one was calculating how long it could go on: for all her preparation, it was said, Germany would soon run short of certain essentials; but a decision must be reached quickly, as banking experts were already predicting a general collapse of credit in November. Memories of the Franco-German war suggested that, with the precision of modern weapons and with the size of modern armies, no nation in the world could support the strain for more than a few weeks.

Nevertheless, whether peace were signed within three months or six, the old national and international conditions under which the men of military age had grown up were destroyed for ever: most of them, though even now they did not realise it, would be killed or maimed; a long war would bleed the world slowly to death, a short war would be followed by such frenzied re-arming and re-equipment as would exhaust every country not

less surely. The days of general luxury, perhaps even of common comfort, were over; taxation would close the great houses and disperse the old retinues. Ethically, politically, intellectually, economically and socially every war marked a transition from one epoch to another; and, before the first unit of the expeditionary force had landed in France, every one felt dimly that an era had closed. As yet there had been no call for more men, as yet none knew whether there was time to train them, as yet it seemed likely that the casualties would be confined to the professional soldiers of the regular army and to the volunteers of the territorial forces; but, though imagination refused to contemplate such an upheaval as took place within even one month, the men between twenty and thirty felt that their world had passed away. Before five years had run their course, the best of them had passed away, too; and of one generation the finest work in the most fruitful period of construction was lost for ever.

This was a time of meditation and heart-searching. So staggering was the shock of war that men's minds refused to conceive of it as the human punishment of human malevolence or folly: Fleet Street dragged in Armageddon and laid the responsibility on God, while finding an excuse for Him in the depravity of man. The moral laxities of France and the perversions of Germany were to be punished by a retribution not less overwhelming than that which had fallen upon Sodom and Gomorrah; as Belgium, Russia and England were included in the general destruction, it was explained that they were being punished, respectively, for the Congo atrocities, the Jewish massacres and the attempted disestablishment of the Welsh church; only Servia, which

suffered first and longest, and Japan, which was far enough away to be forgotten, were overlooked by those who set themselves to justify the ways of God to man. It would take too long to trace the workings of providence in so many countries, but of England at least it may be claimed that there was a disproportion between her offence and her punishment: at the worst her people were indolent, vulgar, selfish and lacking in an imaginative conscience, but a nation would not seem ripe for destruction when four or five million of its members voluntarily offer themselves for mutilation and death.

Meditation passed away with the first bewilderment and was discouraged with every forward step of a nation arming itself for defence. From time to time spirits dwelling in isolation struggled to preserve detachment, the young poets who lay out under the stars in momentary expectation of death raised their voices in challenge to incomprehensibility; but the first were arrested as sedition-mongers and the second were dismissed as poets. Meditation was not allowed to become articulate until the armistice. It were fruitless and ungracious to dwell on the epidemic delusions and organised fury of those first days: they are common to every country in every war;[1] though they broke out periodically, their grotesque violence abated as new work called for undivided attention.

Not for long did it seem that the casualties would be confined to the regular army and the expeditionary force. Officers of the special reserve received their

[1] Anatole France, in *Les Dieux ont soif*, which was written several years before the war of 1914, gives a few specimens of the portents and rumours which agitated Paris when the armies of the allies were marching against the revolutionary government They were, almost without exception, reproduced in England in the first month of the war.

mobilisation-orders and reported for duty on the south coast; after long and anxious silence, during which it could only be assumed that they had crossed the channel and were being hurried into Belgium, some of the survivors at length wrote that they had been in the great advance and the great retreat, that they had lost almost every part of their kit, but were enjoying a moment's breathing-time. After the Marne, they moved up again, "dodging death and danger, without rest or food or drink . . . till death seemed relaxation and a wound a luxury." Although for more than four years hardly a day passed without bringing news of the death, disablement or loss of some relation or friend, for the men under thirty the casualties crowded thickest in the early weeks; their generation was the most plenteously represented in the first months; and, after four years, of their generation fewest remained.

CHAPTER VII

THE FRINGE OF WAR

". . . In a few hours at most, as they well knew, perhaps a tenth of them would have looked their last on the sun, and be a part of foreign earth or dumb things that the tides push. Many of them would have disappeared for ever from the knowledge of man, blotted from the book of life none would know how—by a fall or chance shot in the darkness, in the blast of a shell, or alone, like a hurt beast, in some scrub or gully, far from comrades and the English speech and the English singing. And perhaps a third of them would be mangled, blinded or broken, lamed, made imbecile or disfigured, with the colour and the taste of life taken from them, so that they would never more move with comrades nor exult in the sun. And those not taken thus would be under the ground, sweating in the trench, carrying sandbags up the sap, dodging death and danger, without rest or food or drink . . . till death seemed relaxation and a wound a luxury. But as they moved out these things were but the end they asked, the reward they had come for, the unseen cross upon the breast. All that they felt was a gladness of exultation that their young courage was to be used. They went like kings in a pageant to the imminent death. As they passed from moorings to the man-of-war anchorage on their way to the sea, their feeling that they had done with life and were going out to something new welled up in those battalions; they cheered and cheered till the harbour rang with cheering. As each ship crammed with soldiers drew near the battleships, the men swung their caps and cheered again, and the sailors answered, and the noise of cheering swelled, and the men in the ships not yet moving joined in, and the men ashore, till all the life in the harbour was giving thanks that it could go to death rejoicing. All was beautiful in the gladness of men about to die, but the most moving thing was the greatness of their generous hearts. . . ." JOHN MASEFIELD: *Gallipoli.*

I

FOR various reasons," wrote William Glynne Charles Gladstone to General Sir Henry MacKinnon,[1] "I feel the time has come when I ought to enlist in His Majesty's Army. Heaven knows, so

[1] *W. G. C. Gladstone: A Memoir.* By Viscount Gladstone.

far from having the least inclination for military service, I dread it and dislike it intensely; consistently with that I have no natural aptitude for it, and what is more, no training of any sort. I have never done a single minute's military training in my whole life, I am a rank although not a very robust civilian; even my love of shooting has somehow never led to my learning to shoot with a rifle. I recall all that to your mind because I want to put it to you that under these circumstances there is only one thing for me to do, and that is to begin at the beginning and enlist as a private. I am not prepared to face the possibility, however remote, of being put in some post of responsibility without knowing the ropes very well and from the beginning. . . . I have decided not to enlist in any force which is confined to home defence, but one which in its turn will be called upon to go to the front."

Had William Gladstone been elected spokesman of the men under thirty, he could not have expressed their collective and individual attitude to the war in apter terms than those which described his own mingled sense of diffidence and duty. All who had loved and followed him at Eton, at Oxford and at Westminster shared his hatred for a war which arrested human progress and destroyed human life, as they shared his ignorance of warfare and his dread of assuming inexpert responsibility for the lives of other men; all, or at least all who mattered, living or dead, offered themselves, no less resolutely than he did, in the first hours of war for any purpose to which the government might put them. The rank civilians who were even less robust than he was laid siege to the doors of any organisation that would make use of them and, with no more training in their whole

life than he had of military training, enlisted as substitutes in place of those who were accepted for the army. Before the government, with its counsel of "business as usual," attempted to set going again the arrested pulse of the national life, those who had time, energy or aptitude, how little so ever, to place at the service of the community were already absorbed in new work or awaiting a call to fresh duties.

Sheer inability to sit idle, no less than patriotism, urged them to drive cars and ambulances, to raise funds and equip hospitals, to take the places of their own clerks or gardeners and to toil at the routine of a public office. Dependent on censored newspapers, jejune letters and ill-informed gossip, England was an uneasy home in the unfamiliar days when the whole world was first seething with war. To men past middle-age the news-bills recalled the names of places which they had forgotten since the time, forty-four years earlier, when another German army was pouring into France; would this onrush, all wondered, be as irresistible? Morning after morning the converging black lines of the German advance raced down the map, ever nearer to Paris; one Sunday the notorious "Amiens despatch" prepared its readers for the news that the entire expeditionary force had been encircled. Men, more men and yet more men were the crying need; the order had gone forth and volunteers were to be enrolled by the hundred thousand; but, until they could be trained to an equality with the professional soldiers of Germany, a veritable human breakwater was required to prevent France from being submerged.

It is small wonder—the wish being parent to the thought—that some accepted unhesitatingly from ex-

cited neighbours that twenty, fifty, a hundred thousand Russians, secretly embarked at Arkangel and disembarked at Aberdeen, were passing as secretly through England to a southern port; letters from Scotland told of cars commandeered to divide the stream between the east-coast route and the west; the amateur strategist demonstrated with atlas and encyclopædia that Arkangel could be kept ice-free until September; and it was both pleasanter and easier to believe the man who claimed to have spoken to the mysterious troops in Russian than to enquire what facilities existed for transporting a single brigade to the northern coast of Russia.[1]

At the same time, in London and in the country, impromptu local committees of relief applied for unoccupied cottages and houses, for furniture and bedding, for food and money to be distributed among the Belgians who had sought asylum in England; in those days, though the Englishman and the Belgian never pretended to feel personal cordiality towards each other, the decision of King Albert to uphold the neutrality of his country was ungrudgingly voted one of the bravest political acts in history; the brief defence of Liége was at least long and unexpected enough to hold up the annihilating German advance for precious hours while the British expeditionary force effected its union with the French army; nothing, in consequence, was too good for the victims of German treachery and of their own honour; and, until it became a legitimate form of English humour to describe a Belgian refugee as a Belgian

[1] I am told that a similar herd-hallucination overtook Paris in the war of 1870. A rumour that the Crown Prince's army had been surrounded and that the news was posted at the Hôtel de Ville brought the inhabitants by thousands into the streets till those who were pressed against the Hôtel de Ville and those who were farthest away alike maintained that they had read the official report.

atrocity, these dazed and ruined outcasts were received with liberality and general kindness.

From them and from the press England learned a little of the savagery which had been let loose in Belgium and North France: murders, single and wholesale; raping, private and public; mutilation worthy of a necrophile; burning and pillage. After six years some memories may be dulled, the superior may affect a toleration that they did not feel in those days; some of the stories were exaggerated, and before the end every belligerent had perpetrated a certain number of atrocities. Nevertheless, the original charges were investigated by a commission working under the chairmanship of Lord Bryce, who must be credited with some knowledge of the rules that govern historical and legal evidence; and, even if other armies followed a vile lead, it was the Germans who set the example and enshrined "frightfulness" in their war-book. There was no effective protest in Germany; and, though the need for propaganda and apologetics has lessened, there has been no recantation, no hint of repentance nor sign of grace. It is not surprising that, among those who remember, the name of a German stinks and the presence of a German is an outrage.

Until she appears bare-footed and draped in a sheet, Germany must remain branded with the mark of bestiality: though peace has been restored, though trade has been resumed, there can be no good-will between humane, just-minded men and a barbarian nation which has not repented of its misdeeds. It is not an excuse to say that "frightfulness" was imposed from above, for the humblest private has an inalienable right to disobey such an order and to gain his soul at the loss of his life;

frightfulness, so far from being resisted, was applauded and spread by the women who mocked and spat in the faces of enemy prisoners. Never has a nation been more solid; never has the collective responsibility been heavier. As it is at least conceivable that this will not prove to be the last war, the present result of impenitence on the one side and of short memory on the other is that, if ever there be another, it can be begun in comfortable certainty that murder, rape, arson, pillage and mutilation go unpunished and are a form of warfare for which there is an unchallenged precedent.

The civil and military population of Germany has not made even a coward's show of repentance by choosing scape-goats for the burden of its sins; and repentance has not been forced upon it from without. In the general election of 1918, Mr. Lloyd George promised that the war criminals should be brought to trial; in 1921 we are still waiting to see them punished. Already the Kaiser has one party claiming indulgence for him as the creature of his own general staff, while another would leave him unpunished and even untried for fear that apparent persecution might make a martyr of him. But was not the Kaiser *Kriegsherr?* Is not the *Kriegsherr* responsible for his own war-book? Is it not an offence against humanity and even against the laws of nations to use a human screen when advancing through hostile country? On that count alone he should be hanged.

The fear of making martyrs is based on the misunderstanding of a single historical example: Louis Napoleon fostered the Bonapartist legend a quarter of a century after his uncle's death as a romantic appeal against the unromantic dreariness of the Orleanist rule; it is for-

gotten that the "martyrdom" of Napoleon I. bore no fruit until the French, with their paradoxical blended love of logic and sentiment, found themselves more than twenty years later under a government which satisfied neither craving; it is forgotten that Marshal Ney, "the bravest of the brave," was executed in a way which shewed that French chivalry was dead, yet no one called him martyr. The former German emperor, ruling by right divine, strutting and phrase-making by the affliction of congenital insanity, may be excused as the Emperor of the Sahara was excused, or confined with his fellows in a criminal-lunatic asylum; if he assert his sanity, then his place is on a cart and his fate a noosed rope. Yet one more party, its sentiment stirred by the sight of Count Hohenzollern chopping trees in a Dutch park, pleads that in his downfall he is paying longer and heavier penalty than that of instant and painless death; it may be suggested that inglorious exile is a blessing unexpected and undeserved of the degenerate who flitted across the frontier when the country that he had misruled was in its death agony. The pantaloon of Europe gave up his mumming when the game grew dangerous; with it he gave up his last opportunity of ascending from the ridiculous to the sublime.

Where no imagination is required, the English are a kindly race who find it easier and more congenial to forget than to inflict punishment even when it is deserved, even when the criminal unpunished becomes a model for future crime. Every murderer may be sure of his petition for reprieve; in the excitement of the present an Englishman will always forget the excitement of the past, even when this shortness of memory leaves a debt unpaid. The war is so long over, its later

stages were so different from the earlier that few now remember their obligation to Lord Kitchener in those first months. It is for soldiers and statesmen to decide whether he outlived his own usefulness, whether he reduced the War Office to chaos, even whether the new armies would not have been formed without the inspiration of his name; others may be grateful to an imagination and a courage that led him to warn the country that he was preparing for a three years' war, when the country was wondering whether war on such a scale could possibly drag on after Christmas. Those who were then living on the remote fringe of the war may recall the indefinable sense of security which was brought by the news that he had been appointed secretary of state for war.

More quickly forgotten than anything else in these days was the nation's debt of gratitude to Lord Haldane for reorganising the army and for preparing, in the expeditionary force, the finest fighting weapon in recorded history. His admiration for Germany, his visits to the Kaiser and his study of German methods led a people which prided itself on its dogged common-sense to charge him with treacherous German sympathies; political opponents, eager enough before the party truce to discredit the ministry by destroying one of its most prominent members, encouraged the belief that Lord Haldane, while in temporary charge of the war office, had obstructed the mobilisation of the expeditionary force; and the man who had made the new model army was credited with designs on the country which it saved. When once it is recognised that the English, in their present credulity and ignorance, are unfit for self-government, these aberrations become easily intelligible; it

is not so easy to understand or to justify the action of Lord Haldane's colleagues who, for all their worthless moral support and for all their entreaties that he should remain in the cabinet, allowed him to be sacrificed to popular clamour without raising a voice or stirring a finger to protect him publicly.[1]

These early impressions are perhaps the deeper for that there was so little in those early days, before each man had taken up his new work, to disturb a course of general reflection. When the morning and evening papers had been read, there was nothing to do but to brood over this spectacle of a world gone mad. Everywhere in England there was the same chatter and speculation, the same spy-rumours and epidemics of hoarding; the same competition in war-economies and rivalry in war-services. Every day brought news of new recruits to the army, the civil service and a score of services no less unexpected, until, at the end of September, one who was equally without training or aptitude for teaching returned to Westminster with cap and gown, to become a temporary schoolmaster.

[1] Generosity and war seem incompatible!

Wellington. It's Marshal Ney himself who heads the charge.
The finest cavalry commander, he,
That wears a foreign plume; ay, probably
The whole world through!

Spirit Ironic. And when that matchless chief
Sentenced shall lie to ignominious death
But technically deserved, no finger he
Who speaks will lift to save him!

Spirit of the Pities. To his shame.
We must discount war's generous impulses
I sadly see.

THOMAS HARDY: *The Dynasts.*

II

There would be a smaller public-school literature if the privilege of describing or criticising public schools were restricted to those who had seen them from both the form-room and the common room.[1] "Ian Hay" speaks somewhere of the schoolmaster's life as being the worst paid and the most richly rewarded; and, if no remuneration compensates the damage to nerves, temper and faith when a man tries simultaneously to maintain order, to excite interest and to impart instruction to fifty

[1] I remained at Westminster a year, judging that period to be as long as I could support the daily risk of detection by pupils or colleagues. Sometimes—now that it is all over—I blush to think of the subjects that I essayed to teach; and sometimes I blush to recall the lessons that I actually taught. Since leaving, I have seen my year's work passed in more candid review than was possible at the time and have been honoured with a place in the repertory of imitations in which Westminsters love to indulge whenever two or three are gathered together. If one or two of my least promising pupils pay me the compliment of saying that I taught them at least something, one or two of the most promising now ask me how it was that I never discovered them cribbing in form or thrusting strange gifts down the necks of their neighbours. Our warfare was waged with good humour for the most part, though only a schoolmaster knows how highly his sense of justice may be tested in dealing with some one who is personally antagonistic to him. With many I am proud to say that I made lasting friendships: during the later years of the war I received letters from every front and my old pupils came to see me when they were on leave; since the war they write from Africa and America, I meet them in London and Oxford, we abandon ourselves to school "shop", and they embarrass me by occasionally addressing me as "sir". To my friends of the Modern Transitus from Play Term, 1914, to Election Term, 1915, to the Classical Transitus, the Modern Sixth, the Mathematical Sixth, the History Sixth and the Seventh, wherever you may be, I send greeting; my injustice was unintentional, my incompetence incurable; I should be well pleased to think that your memories of me are a hundredth part as kindly as my memories of you. For perhaps the first three cautious days you were a little awed by me: the cap and gown were imposing, I was taller than any of you, as an Old Westminster I knew too much about detention school and penal drill; above all, I also had lived in Arcady and had sat at those very desks not ten years before; does it comfort you to know that my awe of you continued for three terms? If ever the prayer-bell had not rung before I shewed that I could not solve some diabolical equation! If you had argued a little more confidently against my magisterial rulings! If you could have seen into my mind during the first week, when I took down your names, ranged you in alphabetical order and guided myself despairingly by the two red-heads in the form!

or sixty boys of fourteen to seventeen, reward comes from contact with the minds of boys first stirring to wakefulness and with the characters of boys who, for all their mischief and resourcefulness of attack, are lovable in their ingenuousness, their humour, their chivalry, their conservatism, their strict and strictly-circumscribed honour.

And, if faith is sometimes tried, faith in public-school education was justified in the years from 1914 to 1918. If it be granted hypothetically that the war was won for England and, further, that it was won by soldiers in the field rather than by ministers, munition-makers, bankers and military correspondents, it was won by the leadership of the officers and by the fighting quality of the men; and the leaders were supplied first to the old army and then to the new, for the first years of the war, almost wholly by the public schools. When, at the end, the net was thrown more widely, the quality of the officers deteriorated; though they lacked nothing of courage, they could furnish no substitute for something indefinable but recognisable—never so quickly recognised as by the men they led—which only a public school provides.

Apart from its training in character, public-school education was justified in that, if the aim of education be to teach a man how to learn, the versatility of the old public-schoolboy was a rare tribute to his education; and versatility is not confined to knowing the commercial or even the scientific jargon of half-a-dozen languages. Hardly a man was not in some degree uprooted; and all took to their new work and to their new responsibilities as light-heartedly as they would to a new game. It is in this sense that the British may fairly claim to be an imperial people: the empire, since the days of Warren

Hastings (an Old Westminster), has been administered by public-school boys with public-school methods and the public-school tradition of responsibility; if the empire disintegrate, it will be because the time has come for the administration to pass into native hands or because the work of the public schools abroad is stultified at home. It was the public-schoolboy who officered the new armies, the new civil service, the whole of a new nation organising itself for war.

Though outward forms change little in a school so old as Westminster, the war had brought a new spirit and a new vent for enthusiasm: all but a handful were in the uniform of the officers' training corps; most of the time out of school was given up to parades and drills, shooting-practise, lectures and instruction in map-reading; and war was the one subject that competed with the narrower interests of the school.

Neither in 1914 nor ten years before the testing of war would an unbiassed observer have suggested that English public schools were incapable of improvement; at both times, however, he might have insisted that the improvement must come from the homes of the boys. In effect, English parents try to get their sons, who are destined for a controlling position in the life of the nation, educated for half-a-dozen of their most critical years at a price which is less than they would pay for an equal time at a moderate hotel. The emoluments of a schoolmaster, as of a soldier or a clergyman, would tempt no one who had the assurance or the contrivance to support himself in commerce, in the civil service or at the bar; and for that reason a fellow of All Souls is not commonly found in the army, on the staff of a school or in holy orders. The vaunted long holidays give a

schoolmaster the leisure to keep his mind fresh with travel; they do not supply the means. To marry on his salary is to look forward to years of sordid economies, rewarded at length by the grant of a house and of the right to make money as an inn-keeper.

The establishment fees like those for tuition and board are so insufficient that most schools are hampered for want of money to build, to rebuild, to equip and to replenish; the sanitary accommodation is usually inadequate and sometimes scandalous. This cannot be remedied until parents are willing to pay more; and the mental attitude of many parents is one of irresponsible relief at getting rid of their sons for three-quarters of the year and, with them, of the educational and moral problems that they have artfully shelved until their sons reach school age. Between that which a parent expects a boy to learn at school and that which the school expects him to have learned at home, many unnecessary lessons are taught and many necessary lessons are left untaught.

If, in care and training, a boy were regarded as not less important than a race-horse, the public schools would need to ask nothing more. An adequate payment for the responsibility of education would attract the best scholars in the country and would enable them to retire in affluence after ten years' service and before their hearts were broken by routine. The schoolmaster could dictate to the parent not less than a trainer dictates to an owner, and in this way the gaps in public-school education might be filled; if music, French and German were taught abroad during the school holidays, if the rudiments of divinity and English had been imparted at home in the first twelve years of a boy's life, if the intellectual atmosphere in which a boy is brought up were

less fog-infested, the foundations on which the schoolmaster has to build would be more secure.

Amateur and professional schoolmasters, temporary and permanent civil servants, with those who were over age or unfit for the army, met to the number of many thousands in these days on one field of war activity which deserves a few words of commemoration. To relieve the regular police, already depleted, in their normal duties and to furnish an additional force to guard railway-bridges, power-stations and similar vital parts from enemy attack, the government authorized the enrolment of special constables; for those who were engaged by day, a separate unit with distinctive duties was established in the headquarters central detachment. Divided into sections manned from the clubs and government offices,[1] this detachment was entrusted with the task of patrolling the grounds of Buckingham Palace nightly from 9.0 until 5.0; in addition, its members were required to report at Scotland House at every alarm of air-raid or riot and to hold themselves in readiness to be sent whithersoever required. Organised under a commandant, inspectors, sub-inspectors and sergeants, arrayed in a uniform of its own, equipped with truncheons, whistles, brassards and torches and drilled—whenever it could be collected—in the gardens of the Temple, the headquarters detachment watched and waited through four years.

The spirit of the men was better than the use that was made of them. It would be consoling to think that the mere existence of such a force discouraged enemy

[1] I believe that the Education Office section, appropriately enough, threw into Latin elegiacs the general confession beginning: "My beat extends from (the sentry-box) to (the gate on Constitution Hill) and must be patrolled regularly . . ."; I never saw a copy.

agents from their work of destruction; certainly moral influence was seldom backed by a successful trial of strength; and, when the truncheons were surrendered, very few had been drawn and fewer still blooded. Once or twice, when German shops were being looted, the headquarters detachment was sent to Limehouse or Shoreditch, there as a rule to be mewed up in reserve at the local police-station while the necessary work was done by the ordinary constables; once or twice a cordon would be made round a shattered building or a fallen aeroplane; but for the most part the detachment sat in Scotland House from the summons until the dismissal or patrolled Buckingham Palace gardens through the night, waiting for a conflict which never took place. Before the end, each constable must have sat in the guard-room for one or two hundred hours and patrolled the grounds for one or two thousand miles; the biscuits and tobacco that he consumed are to be reckoned by scores of pounds, the coffee that he drank by tens of gallons; and, though some at least had seen the sun rise more often in the summers before the war, none ever fancied that he could see it with such weariness and loathing. For men who were already overworked by day, the additional fatigue was mistaken patriotism; and many dropped out before the armistice. If, however, few members of the detachment can look back on their service with much sense of pleasure or profit, some can at least hold themselves indebted for new friendships.

III

The speed with which men threw themselves into unfamiliar work during the war was only equalled by the

speed with which they were transferred from one kind of unfamiliar work to another; and to a man who had as little knowledge of administration as of teaching there was nothing surprising in the lightning conversion of an amateur schoolmaster into an amateur civil servant.[1]

One serious gap in the history of the war remains to be filled by a comprehensive account of the origin and growth of the temporary departments. Their number is to be reckoned by the score, their strength by scores of thousands; in function they ranged from encouraging thrift and translating enemy newspapers to ordering heavy artillery, commandeering ships and controlling the supply, distribution and price of food. Some were vast expansions of a sub-department in Foreign Office, Admiralty, Board of Trade or War Office, others—like those of Food and Shipping—were created by a minister out of a museum or hotel, a private telephone-exchange, a code of instructions, a supply of official stationery and an assortment of male and female clerks; some were set to function by an old civil servant borrowed from another office or resuscitated from retirement, others evolved their system by imitation or by the light of nature. If in five years there was a heavy bill to pay for overlapping and waste, for errors of judgement and blunders in execution, for interdepartmental warfare and magnification of private bishoprics, any one who saw the temporary civil service from the inside may feel that it was yet light in relation to the

[1] When Lord Emmott, the Director of the War Trade Department, invited me to serve under him in the summer of 1915, I intended to come only for the school holidays; as, however, the work of the blockade increased steadily, I asked Dr. Gow to release me for as long as I might be wanted.

multiplicity of interests involved and to the amount of work accomplished.

In its genesis and development, the Trade Clearing House of the War Trade Department[1] was typical of most temporary offices. On the outbreak of hostilities, the National Service League found itself with premises, furniture, a staff and a number of at least temporarily obsolete functions. For a time a special censorship was established in connection with the Admiralty; one recruiting officer scoured the clubs of London, another the colleges of Oxford until a big and varied personnel had been collected; when more hands were required, each of the original members would recruit a friend, for whom he could vouch. As the work of the department was concerned with every kind of export trade, no one was admitted who could turn to private account any knowledge that came to him in his official capacity; and, though military service was not yet compulsory nor departmental exemption the desire of the gun-shy, the recruiting for the office was almost entirely confined to men who were over age or unfit.

The "department" had at first no official status; and, when a report of its activities in censorship reached the home secretary, he suggested that it should regularise itself if it wished to escape heavy penalties for interfering with his majesty's mails. At this time the Customs were thrown into difficulty and confusion by the proclamation of the king in council, forbidding all trade with the enemy: in the absence of records, investigation and an intelligence department, it was impossible to say whether goods cleared from London would ultimately

[1] As it had been in existence for five months before I entered it, I can only describe its early history from hearsay.

reach enemy destination; and the censors who were watching the cable and wireless operations of Dutch and Scandinavian importers seemed the natural advisers to approach. At this point the embryonic department, which had risen from the ashes of the National Service League, joined with a licensing delegation from the Customs to form the War Trade Department and Trade Clearing House.

The formal executive authority lay with the Privy Council, but the department was a joint administrative and advisory body, receiving and transmitting information between War Office, Admiralty, Foreign Office, Home Office, Scotland Yard, the new Censorships and, indeed, any other department that would give or accept information designed to strengthen the blockade, to check espionage at home and the transmission of information abroad and to prevent trade with the enemy. As the work became organised and the records increased, there arose further duties of editing, compiling, summarising and translating, too numerous and technical to be described here.

The staff was recruited from dons and barristers, men of letters and stockbrokers, solicitors and merchants; but, until an incapacitated officer was here and there drafted on light duty to a government department, there was not one civil servant. The independent tributes of Lord Emmott and, later, of Lord Robert Cecil are the most convincing testimony that, even without the guidance of those who had been trained in the civil service, these temporary civil servants acquired its methods and imbibed something of its tradition. Within a few days the raw newcomers felt as if they had lived all their lives in a world of registries and files, of minutes

and memoranda, of "second-division clerks" and messengers, as in a few days they were acclimatised to the universal office equipment of trestle-tables and desk-telephones, of card-indices and steel filing-cabinets, of "in" and "out" trays, of rubber stamps and "urgent" labels. The work was done first in congested corners of Central Buildings, Westminster, later in Broadway House and later still in Lake Buildings, St. James' Park. Everywhere the duties of the department expanded more quickly than its accommodation; and, though it began with apparently sufficient space in each new home, within a few weeks the big rooms were being divided by temporary partitions and the small were being filled with additional occupants.

As the civil service has undergone some slight modification in the last hundred years, it is encouraging to find that there is also a slight modification in the public estimate of it since Dickens satirised the Circumlocution Office. As yet, justice has only been done to it by ministers who recognise thankfully that it has no rival in the world for intellectual ability, conscientiousness, loyalty, honour and integrity. Recruited by a most searching examination from the best brains of the Oxford and Cambridge type, it receives fewer rewards and less payment than any other body of men charged with equal responsibility. No "budget secret" has ever leaked out, though it is in the power of a Treasury clerk to become rich beyond the dreams of avarice; during the war no man worked harder than the civil servant. Whether the "business men" who were acclaimed and imported so eagerly contrived to run their departments more cheaply can be answered by any tax-payer who chooses to enquire; that they ran them more efficiently

may be doubted by any one who recalls the nightmare of confusion in which, say, the Ministry of Munitions came to birth; that they ran them with equal integrity may be challenged by small men who were compelled to disclose to powerful competitors their organisation and secret processes.

The temporary civil servant may be glad of his experience in a public department for many reasons, of which not the least is that it gave him some idea of the size and complexity of the government machine; he might sympathise more with a business man's complaints if in his correspondence with a government office the business man were sufficiently businesslike to read what was written and sufficiently intelligent to understand what he read.

From the first, the personnel of the War Trade Department was remarkably varied and variedly remarkable. The chairman of the Trade Clearing House, (Sir) Henry Penson was an Oxford economist; the head of the Intelligence Section a translator.[1] In a neighbouring room worked Alfred Sutro; in another, H. W. C.

[1] Six years before, on the first night of *The Blue Bird,* I remember constructing from the name of Alexander Teixeira de Mattos a mental picture of some one very tall, very thin, very dark and saturnine, with a long amber cigarette-holder and a single eyeglass depending from a broad black ribbon. I had not then seen Max Beerbohm's caricature of him; and, at our first meeting, I murmured to myself, as hundreds have done before and since: "Of course! The old sheep in *Alice Through the Looking-Glass.*" As hundreds have done before and since, I surrendered to his charm; and there is no friend to whom I owe more. For over three years we worked together, many hours a day for six days a week; our minds and moods found something always in common; in five years there cannot have been many days on which we did not meet or telephone or write. In the next five years may there be as few!

I am not alone in fashioning an imaginary figure to bear such a name. I am told that a distinguished black-and-white artist, meeting the name fortuitously, would walk pensively through the streets of London thereafter, searching the faces of the passers-by for one that would fit his ideal, Alexander-Teixeira-de-Mattos conception. And, when they met, I wonder if the artist was as much frightened as every newcomer to the department. On my second morning I looked up suddenly into a white

Davis, of Balliol; in others again would be found a professor, a poet, a publisher, a critic, a novelist and a historiographer royal.

Before the end of the war, the department had grown so big that few could have known more than half of the men and women in it; during the early days, when the machinery of the blockade had still to be erected, a small and amazingly harmonious body, contributing diverse experience from many countries and callings, established a freemasonry with hard-driven men in other departments; there was little obsolete routine; and other offices were not slow to recognise sympathetically that an immense burden of work had to be accomplished with few hands in a short time.

It has been said that the department changed its domicile several times; it also changed its constitution and title. When Lord Robert Cecil was appointed Minister of Blockade, the Trade Clearing House severed its connection with Lord Emmott's War Trade Department and became the War Trade Intelligence Department, under Lord Robert and in conjunction with such blockade organisations as the Contraband Committee and the Foreign Trade Department. At the end of the war, its decomposing remains were buried under the Department of Overseas Trade.

impassive face; eyes unchanging in expression regarded me through the tortoise-shell spectacles which bestrid the impressive nose; the mouth was tightly-shut; neither word nor movement explained this paralysing figure which had glided to my table like some wandering sphinx. "I am not sure whether your minute intends to convey . . ." he began at length and to my indescribable relief. Fear departed with that word, and we collaborated in redrawing the minute. Sometimes the Teixeira panic spread to distant committees which only knew his exquisite handwriting and his disabling knowledge of English; they hastened to do his bidding and to avert his wrath; no chairman likes to apologize twice for "the curiously pococurantist attitude of your committee", few care even to have the apology accepted with the words that consigned so many controversial files to oblivion: "Pray say no more. A.T."

The task of preliminary organisation was not made easier by the uncertainty into which all government offices were plunged whenever a section of the press proclaimed that every department was sheltering companies of potential recruits. This is not the place to engage in a general discussion of the policy or the morality of conscription as imposed, without reference to the constituencies, on a country which, six years earlier, had supported a liberal government in its contest with the House of Lords. The constitutionalists may object that such a course made mock of representative government; the idealist may feel that the achievement of the voluntary system in the first eighteen months of the war was the greatest in English history and that no victory is worth a press-gang; and every critic who is not also a militarist will wonder how the army, alone of the services which require to draw from the limited common reservoir of man-power, is allowed to say that it can fix no maximum but requires all the men that it can get and then still more.

These are general reflections on compulsory service; and, as it had been imposed before the summer of 1916, criticism was then only relevant when directed to the method of its application. If industry was kept in the same uncertainty as the government service, it is amazing that industry was not destroyed. The first principle of applied conscription seemed to be that there were no principles: the system of one day was discarded the next; and no permanent arrangement of work was secure from the risk that a man exempted on Monday would be called up on Monday week. All men of military age were periodically reviewed and subjected to medical reexamination; apart from the waste of time

to all concerned and the occasional incivility of medical boards which attributed physical defects to temperamental malice, no personal hardship was involved at first, though, when the doctors were encouraged to pass as fit for general service a man who had with difficulty qualified for "sedentary duty at home," the civil service too often lost a valuable worker in presenting to the army a confirmed invalid. The hardship fell rather on those who were responsible for organising the work without being sure who would be left to do it.

When once the machinery of the blockade was perfected, the chief concern of the department was to improve and to economise in its working. The year 1916 lacked the excitement of those earlier months when the temporary organisations were playing a game, picking up sides and inventing the rules as they went on; for one amateur civil servant interest only revived with the adhesion of America to the allies. On Easter-Eve, 1917, the department was requested to choose a representative to join the diplomatic mission which was being sent to Washington with Mr. Balfour at its head.

IV

The late war has been described a hundred thousand times as a life-and-death struggle. While a soldier may engage in such a struggle without allowing his reason to be overmastered by his nerves, the civilian population at home, learning little and understanding less, is always in some degree influenced by fear in the formation of its opinions: [1] credit in excess of its military deserts will be

[1] Sir Ian Hamilton's *Gallipoli Diary* is one of many military documents that shew that civilian morale at home cracked before the morale of the

given to the power that joins the war on the right side, while opprobrium in excess of its moral turpitude will be poured on the power that joins the war on the wrong side or omits to join it at all. Italy, which forsook the triple alliance and ran away at Caporetto, is loaded with territorial rewards and praised as a champion of civilisation, while Turkey, which had no alliance to forsake and entered the war—like many another—for what could be got out of it, is first vilified and then skinned alive. It is the fortune of war: by throwing in its lot with the enemy, the Turkish government embarrassed the allies and increased their despondency; by throwing in its lot with the allies, the Italian government relieved that embarrassment and lightened that despondency.

The allies would have been strengthened beyond calculation if, on the outbreak of war, the United States had upheld the neutrality of Belgium by force of arms; or if, on the sinking of the *Lusitania,* they had maintained by force of arms their own prestige; or if, at any time before 1917 and on any pretext, they had eased by military and naval assistance the strain under which Great Britain was suffering. It is interesting and, unhappily, not wholly academic to speculate what Great Britain would have done or would do in the future if the government of a central or south American republic appealed to the great powers for assistance in repelling

soldiers under fire. There was a fantastic legend that the English were unvaryingly calm and resolute, with a calmness and resolution that became calmer and more resolute with every demand. Nothing is farther from the truth. There was a panic when the Amiens despatch was published; and every outburst of popular violence or madness had panic as its origin and explanation. The spy-mania, the attack on Lord Haldane, the conscription campaign, the hunt for aliens and, finally, the Pemberton-Billing case were each in turn the result of a panic caused by accumulated despondency or by the violent despair induced by a sudden reverse. The east-end Jews who cowered in tube stations during air-raids had their own means of shewing fear; but it was not the only means.

an unprovoked Japanese invasion; it is conceivable that the notes in which President Wilson defended his neutrality from 1914 to 1917 would constitute a valuable precedent and model for a British foreign secretary in defending his. The public in England did not pause to sympathise with a people which aimed at keeping itself free from the costly heritage of European politics, nor to understand a country in which the interests of the Atlantic coast were unintelligible on the coast of the Pacific and both were different from the interests of the middle west. It did not even pause to record or feel gratitude for the moral, financial and charitable support of a big section of the United States.

From the day when President Wilson elected to stand aloof until the day when he declared war, Great Britain, despairing of help, gave herself over to sullen murmuring and periodical explosions. That a nation would sooner swallow an indignity than sacrifice its ideal of standing apart from all wars, that it should hope and work for a peace in which the victor should not be able to leave the vanquished only his eyes to weep with was unpalatable in a country which was threatened with starvation at home and with defeat or stalemate abroad. And no attempt was made to conceal this feeling of distaste.

Nevertheless, no enthusiasm was too extravagant when at last America abandoned her neutrality—and abandoned it on the unidealistic ground of material self-protection. By the autumn of 1916 the allies had reached their low-water mark. The summer campaign on the Somme had cost more than half a million casualties without breaking the German line; the Russian thrust in the south had been repelled and the Russian armies flung back with such violence that they required

long leisure for recovery and re-equipment, if indeed they were ever again to play an effective part in the war; Servia, left to the undivided attention of Austria, had been put out of action; and Roumania, entering the war precipitously, was now almost expunged from the map of Europe; if the French had succeeded at Verdun, they had failed everywhere else; forgetting everything and learning nothing from the tragedy of the Dardanelles, the British government had been persuaded by the French to lock up another army in Salonica; the battle of Jutland was still widely believed to have been the greatest defeat in British naval history; Ireland was smouldering with a half-extinguished half-revolution; and a wave of "defeatism" was spreading through England and France until even the armies were affected.

When the belligerents took stock before settling down to the trench-warfare winter campaign of 1916-17, all must have felt that the war had reached its climax. The general exhaustion was so great that, even if hostilities had ceased, every country would have been crippled; if hostilities continued, they would continue on a scale of unlimited effort in which no reserve of strength would any longer be husbanded. Set free on her eastern frontier, Germany must mass all her resources in one last effort to break through the western line; the allies must hold out till the attempt had spent itself and then strike one last blow at a worn enemy; Germany must in turn prevent the allies from holding out by cutting their sea-communications. If unrestricted submarine warfare ranged America on the side of the allies, it must have been felt that either the war would be over before any effective help could be given or else that, in the final, hopeless, death-grapple, a few million soldiers more or

less would not substantially change the degree or character of Germany's defeat.

Many of those who meditate on the war from its climax in 1916 to its end in the Versailles conference may wonder whether they did wisely in execrating and howling down any one who shewed the courage to advocate peace before the sphere of war underwent its last desperate expansion. The government stood by its policy of a "knock-out blow"; the knock-out blow has been dealt. Is any one the better for it? The fire-eaters who proclaimed that anything less than the unconditional surrender of Germany would entail another German war within a generation now proclaim with no more doubt or qualification that Germany is preparing her revenge and has already recovered more quickly than any other of the belligerents.[1] The added two years of war, then, have not brought such security as Rome enjoyed after the destruction of Carthage; the added bitterness of those two years, on the other hand, has made more difficult any good-will and any common effort to substitute a saner and better system of international relationship.

Worst of all are the world-wide economic depression and political unrest for which the protraction of the war was responsible. Had negotiations been opened in 1916, the Russian revolution and its consequences might well have been averted; Germany, Austria and Turkey might have been left with stable governments and yet with enough experience of modern warfare to discourage any taste for further adventures; and Italy, France and

[1] This is becoming a conventional aftermath of any war in which the vanquished is so heavily defeated that he has to make a superhuman effort to galvanize his country into new life. The same alarms were spread by the Germans about the French in 1875.

Great Britain—in that order—might have been saved from insolvency. The war, if ended at that time, would have been ended without American help; and peace would have been concluded without American intervention. This last result might by now be a matter for regret if thereby the world had been cheated of an equitable and permanent peace, such as President Wilson sought to impose on the militarist party of the Versailles conference; but it would perhaps have been better for the terms to be drawn by M. Clemenceau and Mr. Lloyd George on Carthaginian lines than for the world to be tantalised by a glimpse of statesmanship that revealed the universal spirit and then to be fobbed off with a compromise which embraced even the good faith of England.

Of peace negotiations there was much talk in the last months of 1916; even the cabinet was alleged to have its peace-party; and, though the first coalition fell for other reasons, its fall was made possible by a vague general belief that one faction was indifferent whether the war was won or lost and that, if the war had to go on, it must be controlled by the faction which was most vociferously identified with the policy of the knock-out blow. Whether the most tentative offer was made to Germany or by Germany has not been admitted; but informal communications were passing, from the beginning of the war till the end, through unofficial channels, and it would interest any one who is dissatisfied with the present settlement to know whether the German government refused or would have refused a peace in which Belgium, northern France and Russia were evacuated and repaired, in which the authors of all atrocities were surrendered for trial and in which there were neither territorial acquisitions nor indemnities on either side.

For more than this the allies were not entitled to ask, when the gamble of war was at its height; with less than this they could not be content.

Returned to power for a second term of office in the November elections of 1916, President Wilson made a final attempt to open peace negotiations; but the unrestricted submarine campaign frustrated his efforts and impelled him reluctantly to issue a declaration of war: if the allies were defeated, as now seemed more than possible, America lay exposed to any power with a fleet in being. The United States engaged in the war independently and without entering into alliance with any other power; but the closest cooperation was expected and invited. To assist this cooperation, the Foreign Office proposed that a representative mission should be sent to Washington; and, when the United States government received the proposal favourably, the mission was assembled to discuss war-measures with the government of a country at which the British public and press had been scoffing on the ground that it was "too proud to fight."

CHAPTER VIII

AT THE LIBERAL GRAVE-SIDE

". . . . 'I am no goatherd,' said Faiz Ullah. 'It is against izzat [my honour].'

'When we cross the Bias River again we will talk of izzat,' Scott replied. 'Till that day thou and the policeman shall be sweepers to the camp, if I give the order.'

'Thus, then, it is done,' grunted Faiz Ullah, 'if the Sahib will have it so'. . . ."

RUDYARD KIPLING: *William the Conqueror.*

I

THOSE who left London for a rare, short holiday between 1914 and 1918 were liable to find that the war followed them into the country with agitated headlines and with the daily rolls of honour. inevitable and inexorable, with gloomy letters and with vast departmental files bursting through their official envelopes. Those who were drawn to America at any time before the end of 1917 found there a people which seemed to realise the war as little as the English had realised it in 1914: the bitterness of death was not yet come. The excitement and preparation of her first entry into world-politics sent hardly a shiver through that warm atmosphere of peace and plenty; only the hard-bought experience of disorganisation and want, of jealousy and mistrust, of disappointment and impatience could bring home to America the suffering and losses, the occasional hopelessness, the recriminations and in-

trigues, the decline and abandonment of ideals which had overtaken one after another of the belligerents.

It was only two and a half years since idealists in England had talked of a "war to end war," of international justice and the rights of small nations, of self-effacement and sacrifice, of a crusade and a new way of life. For a few weeks England displayed a great religious enthusiasm: the futility and squalor of the old world was sloughed off; a wave of disinterested pity swept over the country; there was a rush to arms and to work; old feuds were forgotten in a magnanimous handshake. How and why did the change come?

Perhaps the conversion was too abrupt; perhaps long uncertainty and fear, long expectation and sudden knowledge of loss impose too heavy a strain on tender, unhardy greatness of soul. Death had hitherto been, for most, a release from suffering or the gentle termination of old age; for very few the mutilating rape of youth. At one moment, every one in England was clamouring to serve up to and beyond the limits of his capacity: in the race to the recruiting-stations, the old and the halt disguised their age and hid their infirmities; at another, each man inclined to see first what his neighbour was doing. Why should A fight while B shirked? Why should C give all he had, while D amassed riches? Why should E's husband be left alive when F's had been killed?

Trust was driven out by suspicion; and for the suspicion there was but too good ground. Some men did evade military service or shelter themselves in fire-proof billets; some made their country's necessity their own opportunity; some hoarded coal and gold, food and oil; there were mistakes of policy and errors of judgement,

as there were German spies and pro-German agents. Of all such, however, there is abundance in every country in every war; and it is illuminating to find that Ludendorff holds up the morale of Great Britain as a model to his own countrymen. Was the strain, were the people's defects of character sufficient to justify the wholesale jettisoning of all the early ideals?

Or was their sacrifice rejected, were their early ideals betrayed by a government which cared too little about everything to see clearly about anything? Two and a half years of war achieved a series of contrasts so violent that a man might well rub his eyes and wonder whether he was in the same country. Great Britain, at least by the letter of her professions, had entered the war disinterestedly to uphold the neutrality of Belgium and to pay a debt of honour to France; she had since surrendered so completely to the acquisitive side of imperialism that she was collecting vast tracts of territory in Asia, Africa and the Pacific, promising Constantinople to Russia, Trieste and the Trentino to Italy—the former ally of Austria—and Alsace-Lorraine to France. In 1914 the prime minister had stirred the world with the eloquence of his plea for the small nationalities, but the stress of war induced him, with colleagues, supporters and opponents bleating joyous acquiescence, to suspend the home rule act which promised independence to at least one small nationality. In an England lately taught to loathe militarism and autocracy, the life and liberty of the subject lay so much at the mercy of autocratic regulations that criticism was stifled. Conscription had been imposed, with every kind of base capitulation, first to the incompetence of the War Office, then to the urgency of the press, then to sectional rivalries between

married and unmarried men. The rights of minorities and the pleadings of conscience were left to assert themselves within the four walls of a prison-cell.

And hardly a voice had been raised in protest. When they found that the policy of the cabinet was committing tens of millions, without their knowledge, to war, a handful of ministers did indeed resign, with less commotion than a man would cause in leaving a table where the cards were marked; but of the others who had raved and argued for non-intervention all were snugly ensconced in office. The major complaisance made easy the minor; and the party which had left its principles on the threshold before drifting into war drifted into conscription without realising that it had any more principles to abandon. Sir John Simon, who had stood forth as the champion of the voluntary system, argued half-heartedly from the standpoint of expediency and resigned when his political influence had evaporated. And yet this servility to the dictates of government was not the result of a splendid resolve to close the ranks and to support the ministry in its hour of crisis: there was no union of hearts comparable with that effected between the republicans and the democrats in America. The united front at home broke down after the battle of Neuve Chapelle; and from May 1915 till December 1916 there was such an orgy of political intrigue as Great Britain had not seen in living memory.

The battle on the home front was joined on the morrow of the campaign which registered the failure of the first British offensive. Owing to disagreement or misunderstanding between the military experts, Sir John French at General Headquarters and Lord Kitchener at the War Office, the battle of Neuve Chapelle was

fought with much shrapnel and little high explosive; Mr. Asquith, basing himself on his secretary of state for war, spoke reassuringly at Newcastle on the shell position; but the commander-in-chief had by now discovered that high explosive was what he wanted, and on this subject it was impossible to speak reassuringly. To secure an adequate supply Sir John French put himself, through the medium of Captain the Honourable Frederick Guest, into communication, not with the prime minister nor with the secretary of state for war, but, behind their backs, with the chancellor of the exchequer. Mr. Lloyd George, though equally responsible with the rest of the cabinet, now posed before the world as the one minister seriously concerned to supply the army with munitions, and in his support the godliest and the greatest rubbed shoulders: Bishop Furze of Pretoria hurried to the assistance of the military experts by giving it as his considered opinion that the Neuve Chapelle failure was due to lack of an unlimited supply of high-explosive shells; *The Times* lent its weight in the same direction. A debate was threatened at the moment when Italy was at last deciding to abandon her neutrality; and, though Mr. Asquith had announced but a few hours before that he did not contemplate forming a coalition government, his colleagues were invited a few hours later to place their resignations in his hands so that a coalition ministry might be formed.

The liberal party was not consulted until the decision had been taken; and the men who had answered every demand on their loyalty for five, six and eight years were sufficiently disgruntled to call a meeting of protest. With the prime minister's entrance, indignation turned to sympathy; he was urged into the chair, and

after an explanation in which nothing was explained, the meeting dispersed, bright-eyed with emotion, to a murmured chorus of "Trust the P.M." In the reconstruction of the ministry, room had to be found for as many unionists as liberals; and, as at this time Mr. Lloyd George was advertising for "a man of push and go" to control the supply of munitions, the principle of coalition government was defined as one in which the tories pushed and the liberals went.

This idea of fusion, with its amnesty of principles, its abandonment of awkward party controversies and its escape from embarrassing party opposition, was perhaps a greater novelty to the House of Commons than to the new head of the new Ministry of Munitions. To the coalition principle he is said to have been attracted for years before the war;[1] he remained faithful to it until the end; and, with the conclusion of the armistice, he exalted it into an article of political faith, which to reject was tantamount to instant death at the political stake; even now, when peace has been signed, the need for coalition government has, in his eyes, not yet abated. The change that overcame Mr. Lloyd George's mind between the battle of Neuve Chapelle and the December crisis of 1916 was that, in addition to the need for a coalition, he saw the need for himself at its head.

[1] "It is said," writes Mr. Walter Roch in *Mr. Lloyd George and the War,* "that as a result of this Conference ('the Constitutional Conference which sat in secret between the two General Elections in 1910, and tried to reach a settlement of the constitutional issue, by agreement'), in the course of which a wide range of topics must have been discussed, Mr. Lloyd George then proposed, and committed to writing, a scheme for a Coalition Government which would settle the question of the House of Lords and Home Rule, adopt some form of National Service, and finance the Navy by means of a loan. But the details of this scheme are only vaguely known and add to our confusion."

I am not aware, however, that the allegation has ever been denied.

II

Before the House of Commons and the country could be prepared for the change of government in war-time, they had to be convinced that the old administration not only had failed in the past, but was doomed to fail in the future. One bird in the coalition nest had to foul it until the offence cried to heaven; thereafter the nest could be rebuilt and repopulated. So, for a year and a half, there was always one member of the government to dissociate himself from his colleagues and to point sorrowfully to mistakes for which his sorrow appeared to absolve him from responsibility. Owing to delay, mismanagement or lack of preparation, Neuve Chapelle, Loos and the Somme by land, Jutland by sea had achieved no decision; the Gallipoli and Mesopotamia campaigns had ended in smoke and blood. The difficulty of raising new drafts, of equipping them and of feeding the civilian population was magnified by a press which ministers scorned to make sympathetic. Ireland had been goaded into revolt and was being held quiet by force. As a record of failure, much platform capital could be made out of the government's succession of disasters.[1]

Whether any other government made fewer mistakes absolutely, whether it was generous to emphasise these catastrophes and to disregard the practical achievements, future historians must determine. The whole

[1] I have ventured to enumerate, twice within a few pages, the chief causes of despondency at the end of 1916: the same thought-wave, given off from the same psychological effervescence, convinced President Wilson and Mr. Lloyd George that the allies were beaten to their knees; the one was inspired to throw the resources of America into the struggle, the other to take personal charge of the war.

of Great Britain and of the British Empire had been brought unanimously and enthusiastically into the war; an unmilitary nation had raised and armed millions of men; it was spending thousands of millions of pounds each year; it was blockading the enemy and policing the seas. It was not, unfortunately, breaking the German line in the West nor the Turkish line in the East. Generosity was not a conspicuous quality among the men who were engaged in breaking the home front.

To Mr. Asquith's eternal credit he rated unity in cabinet and country higher than any tactical advantage that he might have secured by a dialectical brawl with his energetic lieutenant. Mr. Lloyd George, who was now so anxious to "get on with the war," had been less anxious to follow his chief into war at the outset; "too late here," he complained, "too late there," but in every decision, were it the Dardanelles expedition or the shell controversy, he shared full and equal responsibility with the head and every member of the cabinet, he could have resigned in protest—and with greater dignity than he shewed in rounding upon his colleagues for mistakes in which he participated. From the time of Lord Kitchener's death until the December crisis, he was himself secretary of state for war with a predominant voice in all military decisions.

It was easier to forget his own record and to focus the attention of his audience upon the future. After the failure of the Somme offensive, the apparent failure of the Jutland action, another winter campaign became inevitable; food was running short and would become shorter if German submarines were given free play; the evidence collected by the Dardanelles commissioners threw a disturbing light on the happy-go-lucky methods

of cabinet government; ministers were allowing themselves to be bullied in the House of Commons; and from a hundred different quarters there gathered a hundred thousand wisps and wreaths of fog which intensified in a tarnishing cloud of mistrust and disapproval. Under the military service act a man could appeal for exemption on the ground that he was indispensable in his present employment; from the first days of the war Mr. Asquith was hailed as the indispensable prime minister. It is impossible to draw any chart to shew the change in psychological attitude towards him; but by the autumn of 1916, perhaps on the day when he persuaded parliament to accept conscription and imposed it upon the country without a revolution, he was no longer indispensable; very soon the antagonism strengthened into a feeling that the war would never be won so long as he remained at the head of the government.

This feeling was crystallised by Mr. Lloyd George in a memorandum which proposed that a committee of three, excluding the prime minister, should have full direction of the war. Discussion and correspondence followed; the proposal was made public in *The Times* of December 4th; there was one day's more correspondence, ending with Mr. Asquith's abrupt announcement on December 5th that he had tendered his resignation to the king. It seemed unlikely, to the outside spectator, that either Mr. Bonar Law or Mr. Lloyd George would be able to form a new administration, if, as was expected, the liberal and unionist ministers remained loyal to their old chief in resisting an ambitious colleague's effort to supplant him; but those responsible for the upheaval were leaving nothing to chance in the "well-organised, carefully engineered conspiracy" which

Mr. Asquith described as being "directed" in part against some of his late unionist colleagues, but in the main against Lord Grey and himself. Mr. Bonar Law lost no time in handing on to Mr. Lloyd George the opportunity of an experiment in cabinet-making; the unionist members had been approached in advance, Mr. Balfour and Lord Robert Cecil consented to take office and the small fry followed their lead.

So perished the first coalition, the liberal party and the political ascendancy of Mr. Asquith. Now, as before, his supporters were not consulted any more than when he plunged them into the first coalition or incurred that earlier debt of honour which was not an obligation, but which had the compelling force of an obligation in committing them to hostilities; though he expected and received their fealty throughout the first two and a half years of war, he never found it necessary to take them into his confidence before sacrificing every principle of liberalism, placing every liberal pledge in suspense and, at the end, abdicating from his half of the political throne. Ministers had an unchallenged, victorious majority; there was no adverse vote; the white flag fluttered into view before a shot had been fired; and it was not until he assembled the liberal party at the Reform Club on December 8th and hinted at the conspiracy before which he had retired that the party knew its fate. By that time the majority of the party was grown restive under this one-sided loyalty.

Those were days of terrible passion and bitterness. No abuse was too strong for the perfidy of Mr. Lloyd George on the one hand or the lethargy of Mr. Asquith on the other. Ingratitude and bad faith were spluttered from one set of lips; incompetence and indifference from

the other. A "defeatist" cabal in the cabinet was discovered or invented; and ministers were accused of not winning the war because they did not want to win the war. More than four years have passed since that black week and it is still too early to return an impartial verdict. No one is likely to question that Mr. Asquith's loyalty and generosity to his colleagues are without parallel in our political history: throughout the vulgarity of the Limehouse campaign, the tragi-comedy of Mr. Churchill's Sidney Street offensive and the squalor of the Marconi scandal, the prime minister's wide and indulgent cloak was ever at the disposal of the intemperate youngsters of his cabinet; never was indulgence repaid with blacker treachery. Those who like to fancy the workings of providence in human affairs may think that, as Mr. Asquith neglected and misled his party more thoroughly than any other prime minister, so he was overtaken by a more malignant nemesis.

To suggest that he would have lost the war, if he had continued in office, is hardly less fantastic than to believe that Mr. Lloyd George won it. A press-ridden people is liable to exaggerate the difference between one prime minister and another; by 1917 a number of amateurs had learned something of war, and the new prime minister profited by experience as the old would have done; but through the organised clamour and dust of the next two years it is hard to discern a single act of courage or of decision which ranks higher than the day-by-day courage and decision displayed by the government in the first half of the war or which entitled Mr. Lloyd George more than Mr. Asquith to be regarded as a great war-minister. It was under Mr. Asquith's rule that the country was converted from peace

to war, that the great armies were raised and all but one of the great alliances concluded. If Mr. Lloyd George can claim credit for the unification of the higher command, he must allow that from no one but Mr. Asquith would conscription have been accepted; his own effort in 1918 to raise the age-limit and to include Ireland was hardly a triumph of practical efficiency or of political honesty. The difficulties of administration had, if anything, decreased by 1917: if Russia was no longer dependable, America—with all her resources of food, money and men—came to redress the balance. While Mr. Lloyd George's buoyant and inspiring optimism deserves all praise, Mr. Asquith's optimism, if more restrained, was no less constant; his determination, even when no longer in office, to prosecute the war with all possible vigour was a cause of perplexity and of offence to those of his party who wished him to lead a movement in favour of a negotiated peace and to those who hoped to see him retaliating on the new government for the guerilla so long waged against himself.

As the fate of the country they governed is more important than that of either man, so the fate of the party they led is more important than the transitory fortune of its leader. One who lunched at the Reform Club on December 8th, in sight of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman's portrait, may perhaps be excused for thinking of the library overhead and of the shattered host that listened there to the belated apologetics of its leader; he may be pardoned for putting on those kindly, shrewd lips the words: *"Vare, legiones redde."*

III

Even the rout of the liberal party is inconsiderable by comparison with the death of liberalism which took place that day. The old shibboleths of peace, economy, personal liberty and internationalism were discarded; when next liberal candidates made profession of faith, they deafened themselves with a cry for revenge and for indemnities which could not be exacted, until the "war to end war" culminated in a peace to end peace. Forgotten were the aspirations of August 1914; nationality was blessed in the distant security of Czecho-Slovakia but ignored in Ireland; of the ideals with which Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman's lost legions had come into power there remained not one, of practical achievement their record shewed little more than a statute-book cumbered by bold acts of parliament which their authors had rendered inoperative.

The generation that saw the liberalism on which it had been reared stricken to the ground by the annihilating onrush of war still hoped that, with the halting approach of peace, liberalism might raise its head again. Among the faithful are numbered the ardent and generous spirits of every generation; and the faith is imperishable even though from time to time it lack a prophet or a leader. It is inspired by compassion for all who are any way afflicted in mind, body or estate and it exists to relieve affliction by the gift of freedom. Liberty to sleep and wake and work and love, secure from the oppression of a despotic ruler or a strong neighbour; liberty to win the best from life, unhampered by hunger or thirst, by cold or disease, by ignorance or fear; lib-

erty to enjoy the fruits of labour and to engage in the pursuit of happiness; liberty for a man to do whatsoever he wishes, provided that he does not infringe the liberty of his neighbour: all this is included in the faith of liberalism, which embraces also the liberty of the smaller aggregates, which we call classes, and of the larger aggregates, which we call nations, to mould their own destinies and to pursue, each in its own way, its own ideal of happiness. It is a militant faith, for, when compassion slumbers, the need for liberty and the faith in liberty are dead; it is kept ever alert and brightly armoured by the just young, who cannot tolerate that millions of their fellow creatures should begin life handicapped, and by the merciful, who believe that active or passive cruelty is the root of all evil and the mark of original sin. What a man becomes in later life is conditioned by the scars which the struggle for existence leaves upon him; for the man who was not a liberal in youth, there may be pity, but there can be no hope. The men who risked anything or everything in the war attached various labels to their political beliefs, but the act of sacrifice made liberals of them.

After the crisis of December, 1916, fewer tears were shed for fallen liberal idols than for unpedestalled liberal ministers, and compassion was too much needed at home to be spared for export; now, as then, less righteous indignation is engendered by the collapse of liberalism than by the defection of prominent liberals. Captain Guest and Mr. Shortt, Sir Alfred Mond and Mr. Churchill, Dr. Addison and Mr. Macpherson, Sir Hamar Greenwood and Mr. Harmsworth, Sir Gordon Hewart and Mr. Montagu are felt by "wee free" lib-

erals to have sold their master; a year ago,[1] some of them were publicly acclaimed as "rats" and denied a hearing. Those who remained loyal to Mr. Asquith dropped gently out of political prominence until the general election of 1918 dropped them less gently out of public life. A British political faith has never been so completely and tidily demolished as was British liberalism, with its organisation and its army, at the hands of a Welsh solicitor, an Irish newspaper proprietor, a Canadian financier and their satellites, aided by the inexorable logic of events.

The funeral of liberalism was carried out with more despatch than solemnity. On the night of Mr. Asquith's resignation the politicians separated at once into those who had surrendered office and those who hoped to fill the vacant places. *Le roy est mort; vive le roy!* Though Irish, English and Scotch were being killed on a dozen fronts, no time was being wasted at home; as in the political crisis after Neuve Chapelle, more than one soldier-politician had returned to London in full readiness to lay aside his sword in exchange for a portfolio; and before Mr. Bonar Law had visited the king, a "new gang" leader might have been overheard enquiring of an "old gang" minister how much he had got out of the "pool" of ministerial salaries. The mission to America offered to its members a welcome holiday from English politics.

In those days any holiday from London would have been acceptable. Most of those who passed their time in government offices were overworked; almost all of them *ex hypothesi* were in one way or another unfit; all were stale. Their blood unfired by hand-to-hand fight-

[1] 1920.

ing, they became unconscious victims of despondency which bore no accurate relation to the fluctuating fortune of war. While it is probably true that in the winter before America entered the war, when the reservoir of men was running dry, when food had first to be rationed and England was threatened with the "unrestricted" submarine campaign, there was better reason for depression than in September 1914 or March 1918, when the danger was past before it had been fully realised, it is also true that depression continued when improving news from the front should have relieved it. There is a close connection between a temporarily weakening morale and the first decline in the standard of living: by the end of 1916 food was deteriorating in quality and quantity; digestion and nerves were affected; bodily vitality became impaired. There is a connection no less close between mental vitality and light; an ill-lit room produces low spirits, and London was ill-lit after the first threat of an air-raid. Further, the health of mind and of body is dependent on sleep; and, if a civilian may criticise the strategy of the German air-service, it may be suggested that it would have done better to aim at breaking British morale by keeping Britain awake at night. The material achievement of the raiders must have been disappointing to the German general staff: the destruction of life was insignificant; the damage to property trifling; it may be doubted whether the bombs dropped on railways, munition works and public buildings retarded the pace of the war by an hour; there was no widespread panic; the civilian population was never driven to sue prematurely for peace, the seat of government was never transferred. To this extent the air-raids were a failure.

If this contention be just, the most successful phase of the campaign was reached one week when there were six raid nights in succession. London was, in consequence, fretful and neurotic. While no one had the honesty to admit that he was frightened by raids, a few would admit their effect on the nerves of others. With the approach of evening the anxious Londoner calculated from the age of the moon and the height of the wind that it was, perhaps, a "good night for the Gothas." "I wonder whether they'll come to-night," he would observe conversationally, as he went in to dinner; and, whether they came or not, the atmosphere was affected by vague, hardly perceptible uneasiness. When the attack was inopportunely timed, dinner would be interrupted while children were flushed from bed and littered down in hall or cellar. Every taxi disappeared from the streets, the tube stations were filled with highly scented aliens and the anxious Londoner walked home between the bombardments of the anti-aircraft guns, perhaps to find that he was homeless, roofless or windowless. After a broken night, he awoke with a headache; and, if government offices were representative of London as a whole, a proportion of the morning would be spent in exchanging anecdotes of the raid.

IV

At mid-day on the Wednesday in Easter week, after one or two false starts, the members of Mr. Balfour's mission entered a private bay at Euston, where the presence of a special train aroused among the porters mild speculation which died away in the opinion that the king

was making an unadvertised journey. The Admiralty was represented by Rear-Admiral Sir Dudley de Chair and Fleet-Paymaster Lawford; the War Office by Major-General (Sir) Tom Bridges, Colonel Spender-Clay, Colonel Dansey and Major Rees; the Foreign Office by Lord Eustace Percy, Mr. Maurice Peterson, Mr. A. Paton and (Sir) Geoffrey Butler; the Board of Trade by Mr. F. P. Robinson; the Wheat Commission by (Sir) Alan Anderson; the Ministry of Munitions by Mr. W. P. Layton and Mr. M. L. Phillips; the Bank of England by its governor, Lord Cunliffe. Mr. Balfour's personal staff consisted of Sir Eric Drummond, (Sir) Ian Malcolm and Mr. Cecil Dormer. A later boat was to bring others who joined the mission in Washington.

At two o'clock the special train left Euston for a port chosen by the Admiralty, but not disclosed. At a time chosen by the Admiralty, the mission was to embark on an unknown ship for an unknown destination on the western side of the Atlantic, there to escape for a few weeks from the imminence of war and to look upon a country which seemed own sister to the England which all had known before August 4, 1914.

CHAPTER IX

ON THE ROAD TO WASHINGTON—AND AFTER

"Fourscore and seven years ago our fathers brought forth upon this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

"Now we are engaged in a great . . . war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battle-field of that war . . . It is for us, the living, . . . to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is . . . for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us; that from these honoured dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion; that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain; that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom; and that government of the people, by the people, and for the people, shall not perish from the earth."

ABRAHAM LINCOLN: *Address at the Dedication of the National Cemetery at Gettysburg.*

I

SOME extracts from a diary of the next two months will give the history of the mission's movements and may recall, to those who had occasion to travel during the unrestricted submarine campaign, the sometimes romantic mystery and the always exasperating uncertainty of those days.

Wednesday, April 11th, 1917.

Non-stop to Crewe and again to Carlisle, where we changed engines in a hidden backwater of the station. Dormer [Mr. Balfour's assistant private secretary] *ex-*

plained programme: viz. dine on train, reach unnamed port at 11.0 *p.m., embark, land to-morrow at second unnamed port, train till mid-day to third unnamed port and embark in real earnest. Query: Stranraer, Larne, Loch Swilly and the "Olympic?" . . . Rival rumour speaks of a cruiser or two. At Carlisle we stretch our legs. . . .*

Left Carlisle 15 *minutes before scheduled time, thus missing Admiralty telegram. This, however, caught us at Dumfries, where, dining agreeably and looking out over measureless wastes of snow, we were told that we must wait four-and-twenty hours, as the weather was impossible. Mission, which is so far taking everything in best spirit, clutched its despatch boxes and F.O. bags, indicated heavier luggage to obliging soldier-servants and tramped through snow to Dumfries Station Hotel. . . .*

Until mid-day no orders were received. . . . Dormer then announced that we board train for dinner at 7.15 *and start at* 8.45. *The mission is so much wrapped in mystery, and the S. of State so well known that he has been confined to his own room all morning. . . .*

On reaching station at 7.15 *we were presented with further Admiralty telegrams suspending our departure . . . then told that we were to proceed to Greenock. It was low water when we arrived at* 11.0 *p.m. and . . . illumined by the precarious flash of an electric torch, we descended a perpendicular gangway, much as a vampire descends the rain-water pipe on the outside of a house. . . . Greenock Station rumour says that our mission of twenty, with ten servants and sixty to eighty pieces of baggage, is carrying bullion. . . . Some little time on a perishingly cold tender, before boarding "Olympic."*

This . . . has been for some little time a troopship; it is in fact heavily loaded with . . . Canadian . . . wives who are being repatriated; it contains three hundred to four hundred . . . babies, all with . . . a yell on their lips; finally, it has been waiting for the mission some six days, being ready to sail last Friday. . . . Consequently, when the Secretary of State mounted the gangway, followed by a score of men carrying a despatch-box in either hand . . . the cheers rang out over the grey waters of the Clyde. "I cannot help feeling that they were ironical," murmured A. J. B., as we sat down to sardines on toast, cold ham and whiskey at midnight. . . . Unconscious of their doom, the little victims cheered, not guessing that the Admiralty's reason for stopping us yesterday was the discovery of a brand-new minefield outside Loch Swilly. I am told that we shall not start till Saturday, as a further mission, principally from the W.O. and M. of M. is due to start on that day; perhaps we shall wait for it. When, therefore, we arrive or start back, no man can say. Drummond [Mr. Balfour's principal private secretary] *thinks it probable that we shall spend a week in Canada before returning.*

Friday, April 13th.

An inauspicious day for starting, say the superstitious; but, though the Blue Peter tremble in the breeze, I see no likelihood of our moving. . . . Rumour, which is as busy on board the "Olympic" as elsewhere, has discovered that the midnight mission was not a mission at all, but a clandestine escape and that the £800 suite 'midships contains not the Secretary of State, but the ex-Czar of all the Russias. . . . No hopes of a start till tomorrow. . . .

Saturday, April 14th.

Worked industriously . . . until noon, when ears were caught by welcome sound of anchor being raised. Guns, four forward and two aft, were swung into position; three destroyers, like angry dragon-flies, appeared from nowhere and flew ahead; orders issued for every man, woman and child to put, and keep, on life-belt. Bidden by Drummond to lunch with Secretary of State in his cabin. . . .

Sunday, April 15th.

Twenty hours out from Greenock. Our escort has left us, we no longer steer a zigzag course; and high speed, coupled with a bit of a roll, a bit of a pitch and considerable cold has thinned the ranks of the passengers. . . . The Atlantic, considering its size, is amazingly deserted.

Monday, April 16th.

Fairly smooth, settled down to work in earnest. . . . Dormer told me that, the night we were due to sail, every British west-coast port was carefully mined. Hence our stay at Dumfries. The ship's company has been very busy making a wood-and-canvas imitation of a submarine periscope; this is to be flung overboard tomorrow, and punctually at 11.0 our guns will try to sink it. Hope they succeed; otherwise, a lifelike periscope cruising at large over wide Atlantic will distress a number of innocent packets.

Tuesday, April 17th.

Delightfully warm; steaming well south. This an agreeable surprise after being told that we were due to

run into a cold patch over the Banks. . . . Gun practise took place, as advertised; £7 per shell. As the wood-and-canvas mock-periscope sank shortly after being launched, there was no very satisfactory target, but the gunners had still the wide Atlantic at which to shoot and on several occasions I observed them hit it. Noise disconcerting, but nothing to consequent uproar, when 400 children all began to cry at once. However, if they had not been crying at the guns, they would have cried at something else. . . . Vernon Castle, who in happier times waltzes in and out the supper-tables of New York and London in company with his wife, happens to be on board, as an airman.

Wednesday, April 18th.

Weather getting warmer each day. Sighted first ship of any kind since leaving territorial waters. . . . The F.O. News Department is apparently collecting a series of autobiographical sketches of the mission. Infinite possibilities in this. . . . Dined with Secretary of State. A concert on behalf of Sailors' Families Fund. . . .

Thursday, April 19th.

Passing over Banks: bitterly cold; going slow to make Halifax early to-morrow morning. . . . The wireless communiqués *seem to grow more satisfactory each day. Confidential memorandum circulated to mission, hinting what should and what should not be communicated with members of pertinacious U.S.A. press.*[1]

[1] Sir Ian Malcolm was inspired by this memorandum to write his "rhymed endeavour to convey the contents of a grave 'pronunciamento' on deportment: compiled (it is believed) by Lord Eustace Percy and issued to the Members of the Mission before landing in the New World." The poem appears among the "Mission Hymns" in *Stuff—And Nonsense.*

Friday, April 20th.

We came in sight of land this morning between 7.0 and 8.0. Yesterday evening was beautifully calm and clear, and, shortly before sundown, we met four transports and a cruiser escort steaming parallel to us to the south. By midnight we ran into a dense fog and spent the night almost motionless with the fog-horn blowing at three-minute intervals. An escort came out to meet us, but turned tail on failing to find us. Halifax harbour is

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"Circular Notes

To the Mission

In your hours of ease, I beg you
  Missionaries, one and all,
Read, mark, learn, digest and pass on
  This concise Encyclical.
You will find its interest chaining
  —Sometimes even entertaining.

First of all you must remember
  That you go to U.S.A.,
To a land of candid critics;
  So be careful what you say.
I shan't mind the least if some
People think you're deaf and dumb.

If with questions you are pestered
  By the Press for news athirst,
Do not risk replying till you've
  Wired home for instructions first.
Heaven knows what might occur
If you answered "on the spur."

E.G.: "Why bring re-made soldiers
  On your diplomatic stunt?"
Should the ready lie elude you
  Give a non-committal grunt,
Or remark with pungent wit
"Miles nascitur non fit."

(*Note: for General T. Bridges*—
  Please observe a strict disguise;
Don't appear in medalled khaki
  Or regard their martial cries.
If they cap you, don't salute;
If they challenge you, don't shoot.)

Should they ask if England's starving,
  You may answer, "Look at me,
Do I seem emaciated

imposing[1]*—an immense stretch of water with hills on either side and an October-morning haze gradually disappearing before the sun. The mission will shortly disintegrate, as the M. of M. and the Wheat Commission are going to New York. On dropping anchor, we were boarded by an embassage from the Governor-General of Canada, consisting of Admiral Browning, his naval staff, the G. G.'s military secretary and others. We are bidden to lunch on the "Leviathan." Telegrams are flying between Halifax and Washington to discover when the U.S.A. Government would like us to arrive. . . .*

Went on board "Leviathan" . . . and was entertained most hospitably by ward-room officers; taken ashore in launch and spent hour inspecting Halifax. Returned to tea on board "Leviathan"; then ashore again and entered private car. Expect to reach Washington in forty-eight hours. Papers full of mission and arrangements for its reception. . . .

Or in need of sympathy?"
If you have the indigestion,
Ask for notice of the question.

Very possibly they'll ask you
"What is happening in Greece?"
"What about the Spring Offensive?"
Or what day the war will cease.
You should say, "I've no idea,"
And manœuvre for the rear.

There is just one other matter
Which diplomacy dictates
Should be handled with discretion
In non-alcoholic States;
'Twould be well received, I think,
If the Mission didn't drink.

That completes the list of topics
I would have you bear in mind;
To sum up: I urge my colleagues
To be deaf and dumb—not "blind."
Please observe punctiliously
These injunctions.

s.s. Olympic. A. J. B.

[1] This was, of course, before the great explosion.

Saturday, April 21st.

An airless and seismic night . . . until we lay in St. John siding for an hour or two. . . . Due to cross frontier at 9.0 a.m. . . .

Meeting at frontier between mission, press, secret police and representatives of State Department and Embassy, Secretary of State and Long, Assistant Secretary of State Department. . . . Mission must not arrive before 3.0 p.m. Accordingly drew up in siding for three hours. . . .

Sunday, April 22nd.

Crossed the Hell Gate Bridge, an amazing piece of railway construction, only opened three weeks ago, into New York, where we put down the Ministry of Munitions and the Chairman of the Wheat Commission, who will join us at Washington to-morrow night. Part of the Mission will be bedded out in a house provided ad hoc, *the rest will go to the Shoreham Hotel. . . . Two days in the hottest train on record rather trying. . . .*

Arrived safely at Washington. . . . We had a pilot engine running from the frontier before us, another following, the line guarded and the route not disclosed. Despite this, the U.S. head of the Eastern Command states that sleepers were laid across the line last night with intent to wreck the train.

The mission was received by Secretary Lansing and most of the British Embassy Staff, a U.S. naval band, a crowd and several cars, which were then escorted by troops of cavalry. . . . Called at Embassy. . . . Summer weather prevailing; and spring leaves and flowers everywhere.

II

The Balfour mission remained in Washington from Sunday, April 22nd, until Thursday, May 24th, when it set out on its return journey through Canada. During that time Mr. Balfour and some of his colleagues paid short visits to other places, and almost the entire mission went up to New York for the week-end which had been set aside for its reception. Apart from this, as soon as they had established contact with their respective departments, most members were kept too busy to leave Washington: for seven days a week, all day and part of the night, they divided their time between the Embassy, the various departments, the headquarters of the mission in Mr. Secretary Breckenridge Long's house and the mission offices—opposite the Embassy—on Connecticut Avenue.

No one who has ever been to the United States needs to be told that the mission was shewn the most lavish hospitality: city and country clubs extended honorary membership to it; public and private parties and receptions were given in its honour; and the State Department seconded Mr. Winslow and Mr. Hugh Gibson to the special duty of looking after it. While it would be of doubtful interest and undoubted impropriety to describe the negotiations and discussions which took place, it may be said in general terms that the mission was charged with the duty of collaborating in all war measures which the United States government took, furnishing information and coordinating the work of the corresponding departments. A few further extracts from the diary already cited will indicate everything, not closed with a confidential seal, that happened to one member

of the mission during his four or five weeks' sojourn in Washington.

Monday, April 23rd.

. . . Conference at Embassy at 10.20 *to apportion work of mission. . . . Made exhaustive inspection of city: Washington Memorial, Capitol, Congress, Congressional Library, River Potomac, baseball grounds, Federal Museum and the like. Returning to luncheon at hotel met my friend Sir Hardman Lever, Financial Secretary of Treasury, who has been regulating Anglo-American finance in corner of J. P. Morgan's office for four months and has now come up from New York to join mission. Invited to lunch with him, Lady Lever and private secretary. . . .*

Reception at White House; presented to President Wilson. Similar receptions in England would be made more tolerable if we adopted American practise of encouraging guests to smoke.

Tuesday, April 24th.

Paid visit to Trade Department of Embassy to ascertain how Washington conducts its end of our work. . . . Dined with Assistant Secretary of State Polk and attended reception by Secretary of State Lansing to meet A. J. B. Immense mob present; introduced to whole of Congress and most of judiciary. . . .

Wednesday, April 25th.

Walked to Embassy and engaged Assistant Commercial Adviser in talk on blockade questions until interrupted by order that Embassy staff and mission should assume gala costume and cheer French mission on its

way. Sped back, rejoicing at opportunity of wearing silk hat and morning coat so carefully carried 3,000 *miles; thence, with Chairman of Wheat Commission and Financial Secretary to Treasury, motored to rendezvous, disembarked and stood . . . cheering as Joffre and Viviani drove by. . . . How many more missions are coming, God alone knows. . . .*

Reception at Embassy.

Thursday, April 26*th.*

Most of the mission and part of the Embassy staff met at a 2½ *hour conference at mission's house, to arrange programme of work. Secretary of State in chair supported by Ambassador and senior Canadian representative. My work, already known to me, officially defined: now have only to wait for State Department to come and negotiate. . . .*

. . . Wrote memorandum on export trade prohibitions. . . . Bidden to lunch with Secretary of Navy on Sunday aboard "Mayflower" and proceed to Mount Vernon. . . .

Saturday, April 28*th.*

The worst feature of being the accredited representative of the War Trade Intelligence Department is that you are expected to be omniscient on war and trade and intelligent in the intervals. Received deputation . . . on national registration, substitution and compulsory service. . . . Attended conference at Embassy. . . . Party at Alibi Club, a miniature Savage Club with many trophies and no rules. Speeches in American, English, German (pour rire) *and Anglo-French. Half British and half French military missions there.*

Sunday, April 29th.

To Embassy. . . . Then, in tall hat, to Navy Yard and embarked on President's yacht, "Mayflower," to be received by Secretary of Navy Josephus Daniels, in company with entire British and French missions and fair slice of administration and Congress. . . . On coming level with Mount Vernon, the band played "The Star-Spangled Banner," officers and men saluted, and the rest stood to attention. Put off in launches, landed and climbed hill to Washington's tomb where for first time in history Union Jack was flying (in company with the Stars-and-Stripes and Tricoleur). Eloquent speech by Viviani, who ended by placing wreath on tomb; followed by Secretary of State, shorter and even more eloquent, who in turn laid wreath on tomb in name of British Mission;[1] *Marshal Joffre and General Bridges mounting guard the while beside the tomb. Proceeded uphill to Washington's house, which stands on a magnifi-*

[1] It was, I believe, originally intended that no speeches should be delivered; but, when M. Viviani felt that he ought to say a few words on behalf of the French, Mr. Balfour could not do less than speak on behalf of his own mission. There was no time to prepare a formal oration, but the exquisite phrasing of his inscription was at least not less impressive than any speech. The original sheet of paper on which it was written has been, I understand, chemically treated against fading or decay and preserved among the historical records of the United States.

"M. Viviani," said Mr. Balfour, "has expressed in most eloquent words the feelings which grip us all here to-day. He has not only paid a fitting tribute to a great statesman, but he has brought our thoughts most vividly down to the present. The thousands who have given their lives, French, Russian, Italian, Belgian, Servian, Montenegrin, Roumanian, Japanese and British, were fighting for what they believed to be the cause of liberty.

"There is no place in the world where a speech for the cause of liberty would be better placed than here at the tomb of Washington. But as that work has been so adequately done by a master of oratory, perhaps you will permit me to read a few words prepared by the British mission for the wreath we are to leave here to-day:

"'Dedicated by the British mission to the immortal memory of George Washington, soldier, statesman, patriot, who would have rejoiced to see the country of which he was by birth a citizen and the country which his genius called into existence fighting side by side to save mankind from subjection to a military despotism.'"

cent site overlooking Potomac with beautiful scenery all round. House itself, white-walled, red-roofed, colonnaded and decorated in best Adam style, is preserved by pious body of female Regents in almost exactly same condition as when Washington was alive: there is the same vista which he cut through trees so that he could see guests coming miles away over richest English lawn at lodge gates. The house and out-houses, running in crescent away from river, are as he designed and left them, including smoke-house for curing, spinning-house and a dozen more. The gardens are as he laid them out, with box hedges, now grown to breast height, enclosing just such flowers as he knew in his day; and there are trees planted by Lafayette, when staying with him. To me two most interesting relics inside house were large wooden trunk marked "Geo. Washington: Virginia" and, at other end of life, key of Bastille, sent him by Lafayette shortly after 14th July, '89. Altogether an object-lesson in preservation of public monuments.

Sunday, May 6th.

Sunday is, of course, a day of rest. I worked half the morning at the Shoreham, the other half at the Embassy; lunched at the Metropolitan and returned to Embassy till 6.0 p.m. At 6.0 repaired to La Fayette Hotel, thence to a business dinner given by Eustace Percy at the Shoreham. We sat down at 6.30, of all ungodly hours, talked shop throughout the meal and sped away to the Department of Commerce. There until 1.30 a.m. we did the real work of the Trade Section of the Mission: Eustace Percy, Peterson, Broderick (our Assistant Commercial Adviser) and myself. . . .

Returned to Shoreham at 1.45 a.m.

Monday, May 7th.

. . . Introduced to . . . Winston Churchill, the American novelist. . . .

Saturday, May 12th.

After hot and restless night reached New York at 7.0 a.m. Motored down town, called on publishers and drove to Equitable Buildings, where on 39th floor, reached by express non-stop elevator, the Bankers' Club is palatially installed. A considerable view of New York is obtainable from a thirty-ninth floor. . . . Drove slowly up Broadway (the height of the buildings and the slowness of traffic are the two most noticeable things to a newcomer). . . .

Dined at super-palatial Metropolitan (on Fifth Avenue) with American committee of British Red Cross. . . . Adjourned to Carnegie Hall, where grand patriotic show had been arranged. Mission comfortably housed in half a dozen first-tier boxes; house decorated throughout with flags of the Allies; war-pictures, patriotic songs and national anthems ad lib.; *suddenly everyone leapt to his feet and cheered, looking in our direction. Reason was that Secretary of State had just entered his box with Choate, formerly U.S. Ambassador in London.*[1] *At end of performance entire house rose once more and cheered itself hoarse, shouting "Balfour! Balfour!" until Secretary of State consented to deliver short speech. . . .*

[1] It is sad to record that the unwonted strain and exertion were too much for the advanced age of Mr. Choate, who died the following day; yet I doubt whether he could have chosen a happier moment for death than that which saw the great ambition of his life realised in the cordial friendship and whole-hearted cooperation of the United States and Great Britain.

Monday, May 14th.

Reached Washington in time for breakfast. Then to the Department of Commerce, then to the Capitol. Heard Senate debating the Espionage Bill, of which one or two provisions will affect the war trade policy and powers of the U.S.G. . . . Crossed to House of Representatives and heard debate on Revenue Bill.

Thursday, May 17th.

Divided morning between Embassy and Hotel. At noon drove to Mission House for interesting ceremony. The Senate and Alpha of Virginia Chapter of the Phi Beta Kappa Fraternity were convoked to elect into its membership Arthur James Balfour, Cecil Spring-Rice and members of the British Commission. The Phi Beta Kappa was founded at William and Mary College, as a quasi-masonic students' fraternity, in 1776; and, though its secret ritual has now been made public and its oath is now largely formal, it has continued ever since and has spread all over the States. One or two of the most distinguished members of a college are, I understand, admitted to it every year, but honorary membership is the rarest of compliments, reserved hitherto for a handful of men such as Lord Bryce. To quote the President and the Secretary of State, it was the highest academic distinction that America could confer or we receive.

Assembling in an ante-room, the ten of us who happened to be graduates of Oxford or Cambridge marched in and were greeted by the President of the Federation on behalf of the Senate and Deputies of the Alpha of Virginia. Our names were called by one Senator, and the President made an admirable speech. The President

of the College of William and Mary initiated us into the history and mystery of the Fraternity, and the Rector of the college presented each of us with a leather case, stamped with our name, containing the gold key of membership, also stamped with our name, the date, the device of the fraternity and the date of its formation. The oath was then read, and the grip was explained and given. A speech in reply by the Secretary of State on behalf of the mission ended the proceedings, and the Senate was adjourned. We thereupon divested ourselves of our robes and drove to the apartment of Senator Hollis Godfrey, where we were entertained to luncheon. Altogether a charming and most interesting ceremony.

After luncheon I was introduced to Sir Ernest Shackleton, the antarctic explorer, who is staying in Washington. An early dinner, after which I attended the Colonial Memorial Hall to hear Shackleton deliver a most interesting lecture, illustrated by admirable photographs, on his last "relative failure," as he calls it, in antarctic exploration.

Sunday, May 20th.

Rose and appeared at Department of Commerce to be greeted by muscular janitor with six-shooter. . . . Spent morning arranging what I hope will be almost last details of department as it is to be set up here, ranging in my stride from the cubic feet of office space to be occupied down to the number of dollars to be paid weekly to the char-ladies. . . . Motored out to Arlington, Robert E. Lee's old home, now the military cemetery of America and the most beautiful that I have ever seen. It stretches over 6,000 acres of valley, with mag-

nificent timber and winding drives and an open circular temple, from which addresses are delivered on Thanksgiving Day. The arrangement and style of the graves are in excellently simple taste. For the unknown dead of the Civil War there are plain square stones, a foot high; when the identity of any number is discovered, the stone is rounded at the corners and the name engraved.

On leaving Arlington, we motored past the great wireless station with the Potomac and Washington lying below, back to the city.

Thursday, May 24th.

To President's private entrance at station. Dansey and Butler who are staying behind, saw us off on behalf of mission, Tom Spring-Rice on behalf of Embassy; U.S. Ministers present in force. . . . The Ambassador accompanies us to Ottawa. . . .

Friday, May 25th.

Ran through Buffalo shortly after breakfast and left train at Niagara. Our American escort, Mr. Secretary Long, Hugh Gibson of the State Department and others provided us with trams and drove us down to the Rapids, then back to the Falls, from the American side. In size, beauty and volume of water they came fully up to my expectations: it is a strange sensation to stand, as it were, on the edge of the world and see a gigantic lake pouring over within a foot of where you stand. The spray rises in a snow-white cloud as high again as the length of the falls, and it is impossible to penetrate it to the other side. Our American escort then turned us out of the cars, which the leading citizens of Niagara

had thoughtfully provided, and restored us to our tram, in which we proceeded half-way across the bridge. There we took an affecting farewell, and, as the Americans left by one door, the Canadian escort, composed chiefly of lieutenant-governors and custodians of the Niagara property, entered by the other. We were then shewn the Canadian side of the Horse Shoe fall, conducted over the power station which supplies Toronto and driven out to the Canadian side of the Rapids and the Whirlpool. There is an aerial car running on cables over the Whirlpool (at a sickening height, say the timid) and almost all of us, myself included, were induced to risk our lives on the principle that where the Secretary of State leads the rest of the mission follows. . . .

At Toronto, I was told off to help lieutenant-governor's secretary; so sorted procession into carriages, jumped into private car and drove ahead of the band's sound and fury to Parliament Buildings, where I got in touch with a cable office, thanked Sir R. Borden in suitable terms for his telegram of welcome and strolled out to front, where, as on scaffold, Secretary of State was being subjected to native eloquence of mayors, lieutenant-governors et illud genus omne. *His speech in reply aroused great enthusiasm, and, after interval for cinematograph men to ply their task, party moved away from scaffold. . . . Hurried away to bombard Government House and porter's office for several pieces of missing baggage; . . . and drove in haste to Government House for dinner. . . .*

The mission went from Toronto to Ottawa, thence to Montreal and Halifax.

Saturday, May 26th.

Nine hot, dusty hours wherein I was almost too tired to smoke or look out of window; general coma. . . . Peterson met me at Montreal Station at 6.35 p.m., and we drove to his house. Sir William[1] *is at present in nursing-home, so we have place to ourselves. Heaven be thanked for the peace and quiet of it! No elevators, no bands at meals, no Middle-West-Congressman's wife being "paged" throughout the living rooms, no telephone calls, no expectant pressmen, nothing but simple English food, a silent house, deft female servants, a comfortable room, a warm bed, a spring-mattress and, in general, the conditions necessary to the mental peace of one whose nerves are rather quickly breaking up under the strain of the last six weeks.*

After a tête-à-tête *dinner, Peterson and I walked round to the Mount Royal Club. . . . The rest of the mission is timed to leave Toronto this evening for Ottawa, where we are due to join it in three days' time; as, since the Parliament Buildings were burnt down, there is nothing much to see or do in Ottawa, and, as the mission is expected in Montreal on its way home, unless the anti-conscription riots become unduly intense, it would be highly satisfactory if we could arrange to join forces here instead of toiling back to Ottawa and from Ottawa to Montreal.*

Monday, May 28th.

Awaiting telegraphic reply from Dormer to our request for leave to stay in Montreal until the mission

[1] Sir William Peterson, then Principal of M'Gill University. While writing this book, I received by wireless, on my way to South America, the sad news of his death.

picks us up here on its homeward journey. Tried to arrange meeting with Stephen Leacock, who lectures to the students of M'Gill in the intervals of writing his immortal books; unhappily he is away from Montreal at present. . . . Caught Dormer by a long-distance call to Government House, Ottawa. . . . I may remain at Montreal until Wednesday, when mission comes to present Secretary of State, General Bridges and Admiral de Chair for honorary degrees and to pick me up en route *for the boat. . . .*

Wednesday, May 30th.

. . . To Grand Trunk Station and waited for arrival of mission train in company of Montreal's more distinguished citizens and a naval and military escort which whiled away time by practising "Maple Leaf." Great reception when party arrived and was driven to Windsor Hotel, where Canadian Club of Montreal, to number of 800, including guests and pressmen, presently sat down to crowded luncheon. Speeches by President, Secretary of State, Ambassador and Lord Shaughnessy, all delivered amid terrific cheers. . . . Then to Royal Victoria College. . . . Introductory speech by Principal, followed by presentation of Admiral de Chair, General Bridges, Sir C. Spring-Rice and Secretary of State for M'Gill degrees. . . . So to Grand Trunk Station. The mission, though impoverished by loss of Eustace Percy, Phillips, Paton, Rees and Peterson, is now enriched by presence of Judge Amos, J. H. Thomas and others.

Dined on train, drew up opposite Quebec, and left for better view of Heights of Abraham by moonlight. . . .

Thursday, May 31st.

Rose to find that we were steaming into Matepedia, on border of Quebec and New Brunswick. As we are a valuable mission, not lightly to be sunk by first Hun submarine, as General Pershing of the U.S. Expeditionary Force may meet us at Halifax and cross with us on the "Olympic," [1] *and as part of his staff is already with us, we are seeking to elude the omnipresent Boche by lying in siding in peculiarly deserted portion of Dominion from 9.0 a.m. till 1.30 a.m. to-morrow. Unfortunately for General Bridges, Governor of Bank of England and other noted anglers, the salmon have not yet come up the river; the rest of us, however, availed ourselves of fishing club-house and sat in verandah reading and smoking for portion of morning. In afternoon walked for several miles. No better place could have been chosen for our 16 hours' delay. Two rivers join here and flow down at rapid pace, bearing ceaseless burden of rough lumber, cut and marked miles nearer source and floated down to depot where it is collected. Tree-clad mountains all round, which will be in leaf in a few weeks' time, and on top of the mountains wide-stretching prairie land, now almost free of snow and gradually being put under the plough.*

Friday, June 1st.

Secured a little sleep in morning hours as train, discovering dozen derailed cars 12 miles ahead, elected to retire into siding while the breakdown gang got to work. As line cannot be cleared for many hours and as we have to leave Halifax about sunset, we shall be 24 hours' late

[1] In fact, General Pershing crossed independently.

in starting and can look forward to another night in the train.

Saturday, June 2nd.

Left train about 10.0 *a.m. and proceeded by tender to "Olympic," where commander, surgeon and purser greeted us as old friends. . . . Taken off by picket boat to lunch on Admiral Browning's flagship "Leviathan" once more and met same charming ward-room mess as had entertained me six weeks before. Rejoined ship after tea. We carry no repatriated Canadian wives this trip, Heaven be thanked; but troops to the number of* 6,000 *are round, above, below and in the middle of us. . . .*

III

Sunday, June 3rd.

After a long night in a comfortable stateroom, I felt better than I have done for weeks. As a troopship we are restricted in liberty and comfort to some extent. Shrill bugles have exasperating knack of blowing a reveillé *at* 5.0 *a.m. and repeating same at half-hour intervals; troops assemble on deck for physical drill, and between parades there is never any room to walk anywhere. As a set-off, we have a tolerable military band, now, alas, temporarily hushed to make room for foghorn as we steam slowly through the mists of the Newfoundland Banks.*

Monday, June 4th.

The day promised to be so lacking in incident that a solicitous management arranged an impromptu subma-

rine scare. As we sat over our afternoon coffee and cigars, a bugle sounded a call unknown to me, but evidently familiar to every officer in the smoking-room, who took up his position in the "Birkenhead" manner on deck with his men. Within a few seconds bugles were calling all over the ship, one call after another, and every door and companion-way was filled with troops racing to their places. With a view to avoiding crowded promenade deck I sauntered on to boat deck, which by happy coincidence chanced to be the station accorded to the mission. As soon as the tumult and the shouting had died, we returned to our former places and avocations, and I was gratified to see that in the disorder I had got rid of a very uncomfortable life-belt in favour of one both more comfortable and more becoming.

Tuesday, June 5th.

The climate has grown trying, as we run in and out of the Gulf Stream, alternating tolerable cold with moist heat. I devoted my morning to work and dined with the Secretary of State.

Wednesday, June 6th.

A tranquil day was only disturbed by the necessity of preparing a report on my activities in Washington, to be added by Drummond to that volume of reports in which each member of the mission strives to ascribe to himself the credit for the mission's general success. In the afternoon there came the customary submarine alarm. . . .

Thursday, June 7th.

Last night we entered the danger-zone, and our precautions were redoubled. The military police march up

and down, treading with heavy foot on any who carry life-belts instead of wearing them; armed sentries also stand by every life-boat to the end that, when the deadly torpedo has done its work and our ship's complement of 7,000 *is tossing about in life-boats and on rafts, there shall be attached to each party at least one man with a rifle, making life unpleasant to the submarine crew, if any question of machine-gunning the survivors arise. . . . As a compliment to the United States Navy, the convoy was made up of two American destroyers, subsequently increased to four. In the evening, by urgent request, the Secretary of State addressed the officers of the various Canadian regiments in the saloon. There followed a concert, principally contributed by Madame Edvina, whom we have the honour of carrying this trip. . . . Having discovered a native aptitude for the game of chess, I left the concert to take care of itself and competed with Judge Amos.*[1]

Friday, June 8*th.*

Escorted by a varying number of U.S. destroyers, we slipped by eight submarines, and by the end of dinner were in sight of the Irish and Welsh coasts. After the officer commanding the Canadian troops had proposed the King's health, J. H. Thomas proposed the health of President Wilson and the U.S. Navy. A presentation is being made to the Secretary of State by the members of his mission. . . .

[1] Judge Amos, now Judicial Adviser in Cairo, endorses the substantial truth of the report which circulated about his chess-playing at this time. A tall man with a folding pocket-chessboard and a coloured silk handkerchief containing an incomplete set of chessmen might have been observed at almost any hour of the day or night prowling the deck with a preoccupied air and seeking to lure any one into playing with him. Those who knew the moves promptly beat him; those who did not know the moves had

Saturday, June 9th.

We dropped anchor in the Mersey at about 2.30 *a.m. Immediately and for the short remainder of the night some* 6,000 *troops mobilised for disembarkation. Called at* 6.0, *but did not enter special train until* 11.15. *Read that J. H. Thomas has been made a Privy Councillor, which left pleasant taste in the mouth at end of long, varied, interesting and very pleasant mission.*

them lucidly explained—and then beat him as promptly. He had, I believe, exhausted the 6,000 Canadian troops, the ship's company and the other members of the mission before approaching that corner of the smoking-room in which, according to the story, I was sitting with an expression of imbecility calculated to suggest that I could not play chess and would not learn. He persevered with his explanation and after five minutes challenged me to a game. I hate to record that he did not win it.

CHAPTER X

LONDON AGAIN

". . . . After a little while He saw one whose face and raiment were painted and whose feet were shod with pearls. And behind her came, slowly as a hunter, a young man who wore a cloak of two colours. . . .

And He followed swiftly and touched the hand of the young man and said to him, 'Why do you look at this woman and in such wise?'

And the young man turned round and recognised Him and said, 'But I was blind once, and you gave me sight. At what else should I look?'

And He ran forward and touched the painted raiment of the woman, and said to her, 'Is there no other way in which to walk save the way of sin?'

And the woman turned round and recognised Him, and laughed and said, 'But you forgave me my sins, and the way is a pleasant way. . . .'

And when He had passed out of the city He saw seated by the roadside a young man who was weeping.

And He went towards him and touched the long locks of his hair and said to him, 'Why are you weeping?'

And the young man looked up and recognised Him and made answer, 'But I was dead once and you raised me from the dead. What else should I do but weep?' "

OSCAR WILDE: *The Doer of Good.*

I

LONDON during the second half of 1917 differed from London during the late months of 1916 in that, so soon as the United States abandoned neutrality, the Allies were assured of victory unless the German submarine fleet obtained the mastery of the Atlantic and prevented troops and food from reaching

Europe or unless the German army, no longer menaced on the eastern frontier since the Russian Revolution, could break through on the west and capture Paris or the channel ports. The second course was tried in March, 1918, the first never ceased to be tried until the armistice; but, whereas in the winter of 1916-17 there was widespread doubt in England whether the war could end otherwise than in a stale-mate, from the middle of 1917 it was evident that the war could and would be fought to a finish and that the ultimate military decision lay with the inexhausted and inexhaustible armies of the west.

It was to Washington, therefore, that the centre of interest now shifted; and those who had lately returned from America were bombarded with enquiries about the feeling and condition of the United States. The corporate life of the Balfour mission came to an end with the welcome accorded to its head at the Guildhall and at the Mansion House luncheon on July 13th; and, when its members had reported their return to their departments, they were free to study the psychology of London in what, even then, was known to be the last phase of the war. Since 1914 they had been too busy to catch more than a passing glimpse of their friends as they flashed to and from the front or from their work at home; and the novels and memoirs of this period will be an untrustworthy guide to future social historians in so far as they suggest a life of unrelieved frivolity and pleasure-seeking when the greatest war effort had yet to be made. There were certainly days and nights of epidemic excitement, which occasionally turned to sporadic insanity; now, as in every phase of the war, there were men and women who made of the public dis-

organisation an excuse for abandoning all recognised restraints; but the general change was little more than a universal restlessness in which the nerves that had been kept tense by the daily demands of the war refused to be relaxed in hours of leisure. If there were more distractions in 1917 than in 1915, there was also more work done, and it was better organised; the novels and memoirs, naturally enough, give little space to daily routine; but it is less true to suggest that those who lived in London were grown indolent or callous to the war than that they had accommodated their private lives to public requirements. No one was surprised if a man went from his office to dinner without dressing or if he was made late for luncheon by a daylight air-raid. Informality, first imposed by necessity, was found to be amusing in itself; and an element of impromptu picnic crept into most of the parties of that time.

This deliberate attempt to preserve as much of the old life and interests as the war would allow was in part a self-imposed discipline and a refusal to be stampeded; in part it was an effort to make London tolerable for those who were on leave from their service abroad and at home; and in part it was an instinctive struggle to retain something familiar in an unfamiliar world and to refresh the brain with a diversion in which war had no share. The years from 1915 to 1919 saw a prodigious output of new literature and music; and, if it is still too early to judge of its quality, there can be no question about the intellectual stimulus which it supplied. Every kind of book was read and discussed; every new school of painting had its followers; and love of music, ceasing to be the foible of the few, became the craving of the many. Though not yet conspicuously prompt in pay-

ment, the gratitude of thousands is due to the devotion of Sir Thomas Beecham and of his supporters for the opera which they maintained at Drury Lane with untiring enterprise and energy; without their labours, Covent Garden would be as dead as the London Opera House; no opera in English would ever get a hearing; and in 1917 and 1918 London would not have had its mixed programme of English, Russian, French, Italian and German opera.

II

Early in 1918 came the black days of the last German offensive. All the optimism and relief of 1917 evaporated before the quick, merciless rain of blows that battered Amiens and threatened Calais, shattered Rheims and overhung Paris. In the southwesterly onrush of 1914 the French declared that, if Paris fell, they would transfer their seat of government to Bordeaux (as they did) and, if need be, to the foot-hills of the Pyrenees; in 1918 any defeat was temporary, for in time the new American levies must burst by sheer weight of metal through any army that had been carded down by four years of fighting; but by 1918 many were asking themselves whether the French spirit would still be equal to this last desperate resolution, whether the British could carry on with a spear-head through their line at Amiens and whether the Americans would make headway in a country as completely overrun as Belgium had been.

To civilians, the crisis of March 1918 arose suddenly; they may be thankful that it ended no less suddenly, but the results of the crisis outlived the crisis itself. In so far as it is true to say that the English ever

lost their heads, they lost them between the March offensive and the December general election of 1918. For more than four years there had been the relaxation of bonds which is natural when life is no longer secure: sexual relationships became increasingly promiscuous, marriages were contracted, abandoned and dissolved with reckless disregard of private morals or public responsibility; and the craving for such excitement as would bring forgetfulness led to the excessive indulgence of every physical appetite. While this relaxation continued at a steadily increasing pace, it was only in the final months of the war that the loss of self-control became inconsistent with a balanced mind. The sordid scandals of this last phase, born of intemperance in drink or drugs and stimulated to their climax by undisciplined passions, were occasionally dragged to light in a police-court or at a coroner's inquest; but in degeneracy, as in crime, it is usually the inexpert who is detected, and any one who lived in London during those feverish months had forced upon his notice a spectacle of debauchery which would have swelled the record of scandal if it had been made public but which is mercifully forgotten because it was incredible.

This is neither the place nor time to pass a judgement on it; and perhaps it does not deserve to be too strictly condemned. In threatening all and in fulfilling with many the unexpected fate of material ruin, physical mutilation and premature death, a war which strikes at the normal security of life must be accepted with abnormal resignation or resisted with abnormal resolution. As the instinct of self-preservation, rising sublime into pride, sinking into base fear and ranging through every spiritual state between these extremes, automatically

precludes the alternative of surrender, the abnormal resistance has to be fortified by an abnormal appeal to primitive reserves of endurance and courage which modern man, inheriting from his earliest ancestors, keeps stored for rare moments of emergency. The bodily and mental tortures of an unanticipated catastrophe, be it war, earthquake, shipwreck or fire, are only made supportable by the aid of qualities so primitive as to be extraneous to the character of civilised man; and, as it would be unreasonable to expect that he should be able to unbar an ancient door and to release one potent force while keeping all others enchained, the additional fortitude by means of which the war was borne at least with general dignity had to be accompanied by the accession of qualities less conventionally admirable.

In short phrase, the restraints of modern civilisation were burst on the resurgence of primitive man. Honourable, kindly, fastidious, gentle and reserved spirits, dragged back across the ages, lied and cheated, fought and bullied in an orgy of intrigue and self-seeking, of intoxication and madness. Only in this way and at this price could those who had fared delicately and lived softly endure hardships which for generations or centuries had been removed from the average experience of civilisation; the bravery of the savage emerged hand in hand with the savage's ferocity, his licence, his superstition and his credulity.

While time and tranquillity are needed before these unruly forces can be finally subdued, the panic rush of mob-madness passed quickly.

With the second battle of the Marne even a civilian knew that it was a matter of months or weeks before the Germans capitulated. Casualties would still be re-

corded; agony would be endured, uncertainty would continue; there might be a final berserk outburst on sea and land, but ultimately the German government would sue for peace. No one was surprised when the "fourteen points" were flashed on the sky from Washington; no one was surprised when the Germans saw in the west the grey, hopeless light which was yet the only light that they could ever hope to see. Capitulations poured in until some of the onlookers, in the spirit of Horace Walpole, searched eagerly through their papers of a morning to see which new enemy had surrendered.

And yet, when the maroons burst the stillness of London at the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month, all were surprised; not by the fact of peace but by the imponderable significance of peace. Did this ear-splitting salvo mean one last raid by every aeroplane in the German fleet, an *auto-da-fé* which should at least achieve that, when peace was negotiated, it would be elsewhere than in the smoking, brain-splashed ruins of a shattered London? In late afterthought, with an air of discovery and a dread of revealing emotion, every one decided that the Germans must have accepted the armistice terms.

Ten minutes later the government departments were belched forth on holiday. Along the Processional Avenue moved slowly a double line of cars and taxis, packed inside and out and above with atoms of a vast concourse infected by a lust for moving from any one place to any other. Beyond this, no one knew what to do. The king had already spoken from a window of Buckingham Palace. Superficially it was all a little boring; and, below the deliberately suave, unemotional surface, all knew that the day was so tremendous that none dared

look at it yet. A child-typist from a Government-office hut rushed into the Mall, white-faced, bareheaded and delirious. "The war's over! Now daddy'll come home!" By her side a woman winced and looked, groping after sympathy, for someone who, like herself, knew that the armistice had come too late. Throughout the world there were houses in which the glory of peace would be turned to mourning by news of a son who had been killed in the last few hours of fighting: the roll of honour is not yet complete; and, more than two years after the armistice, there are still men in the blue jackets and trousers of their hospital.

III

With the armistice another chapter would seem to open; but, in spite of the tangible fact of victory which should have divided all that came before from all that came after, the abrupt transition to peace was effected in the psychological atmosphere produced by the last months of war. Had this not been so, there would have been no purpose in making more than a passing reference to the war insanity which followed the dread and despair of the March offensive; unhappily for the peace of the world and for all hopes of a universal spirit, the Versailles conference was inspired by frenzied memories of the mad election of December 1918 and the mad election translated into actuality and crystallised that mood of madness whereof a mental pathologist would have said that epidemic hysteria was abroad, others—in the words of an old chronicler—that "Christ and His angels slept."

Public degradation in England has scored many good

totals; in the vulgar abuse showered upon O'Connell, in the salacious persecution of Stead, in periodic waves of insensate arrogance, cruelty, ignorance and injustice; the English have had their South African war, their yellow labour and their persecution of conscientious objectors to remind the world that, whatever their pretensions, they are still human. The personal experience of the oldest and the historical reading of the most erudite would have difficulty in finding a greater collective degradation than was reached in the public attitude, during the last months of the war, to what is known as the "Pemberton-Billing case."

The slightest reference may unprison the foul gases of that trial; it is best to regard it as the necessary result of a nervous and physical strain too great to be borne. Day after day, in an English court of law, before a British jury and the senior judge of the King's Bench Division there was recited a tale of intrigue and debauchery from which the librettist of a melodrama would have turned away in unbelief and the alienist in disgust. Honoured names were introduced as pegs for the charge of treason and sexual perversion; the educational influence of the press was exerted to secure that a hundred thousand villages should be made acquainted with the bewildering nomenclature of infamous vices. When the original newspaper charges were met with a countercharge of criminal libel, the direction of the judge and the intelligence of a British jury resulted in a verdict of "Not Guilty." And there was cheering in court and in the street. And some people believed that, as the prisoner had been acquitted, the charges must be true. After three years we can look back on judge and jury, prisoner and public with less disgust than pity; to the

psychologist the Pemberton-Billing trial is a reminder that he must be on his guard whenever he hears stereotyped phrases about the political instinct, the justice and sanity, still more the chivalry of the English. Not even as a political manœuvre was it successful.

The "low intelligence and high credulity" [1] of a public which, periodically and in the last resort, is entrusted with an imperial mission among several hundred millions of people may be measured by the belief accorded to a single allegation. In the course of the trial frequent reference was made to a "black book," then romantically entrusted to the blackmailing custody of Prince Wilhelm of Wied, in which were recorded the names of at least 47,000 people who occupied some prominent position in English society and who lay, by reason of their vices, at the mercy of the first enemy who threatened them. Any one whose work has taken him among books, any one who has had occasion to consult a card-index, would know that it requires a bulky catalogue to print, even in "brilliant," 47,000 names with enough crime-sheet to each to ensure that its bearer could be hushed or drummed out of public life. The book, whatever its size, was filled with matter so confidential that, when a taste of its contents was to be offered to an officer who was conveniently dead before the case came to trial, it had to be carried beyond the reach of spies and eavesdroppers and laid bare under the sky of the English countryside; there was no room, there was no open space in London where its guilty secrets could be revealed. The limits of a novelist's daring are more quickly reached than those of a jury's simple faith.

This case, with its startling blend of melodrama and

[1] The phrase is borrowed from Mr. Asquith.

pruriency, wounded and injured in greater or lesser degree everyone whose name the learned judge tolerantly allowed to be mentioned. That, perhaps, was the fortune of law as administered, with all the responsibility and decorum attaching to his great office, by Mr. Justice Darling. What was said really does not matter so much as that thousands of people believed it to be true. By this test, if it were indeed ever needed, a big part of the British public shewed itself to be as ignorant, suspicious, cruel and base-minded as any big part of any other public, including that which had persecuted Dreyfus—to the righteous indignation of the equitable English. And, though perhaps the ignorance and suspicion, the base-mindedness and cruelty were the after-result of fear, from which the Englishman suffers as much as any one else, the public temper at the time of the Pemberton-Billing trial—not wholly unlike the temper of a mob in a southern state when a negro is being lynched—survived when fear had been laid to rest: ignorance and suspicion, fear, revenge and greed provided the atmosphere of the conference in which the statesmen of the world met together to contrive a peace which should end war.

It was in the power of the prime minister to allay these evil passions or to stimulate them. With the unbounded prestige that attaches to the head of any government still in office at the end of a long war, he could have united all parties in his struggle for a great and durable peace not less certainly than he had united them in his prosecution of the war; as they had responded to every demand in war, so they would have made every sacrifice for peace; as he had curbed their impatience and lightened their despondency, so he could check their

greed and set an ideal before their eyes. Mr. Lloyd George saw the light and turned his back upon it. With all an old demagogue's art in playing on popular passion, he outbid the wildest and outdid the most sanguinary: the cry for indemnities and the howl for revenge were drowned in his own shouted promise that England should have her fill of blood and gold if she would but return him to power.

It is at least arguable that Germany in defeat should have paid not less than she would have exacted, in victory, from another power; one school considers that to leave the ex-Kaiser and his associates unpunished is to condone the atrocities for which they were responsible and to make these the permissible minimum in any future war. No armistice terms would be complete unless they made provision for bringing the war-criminals to book. Equally, no armistice terms deserve serious attention if they promise that which their signatories know to be incapable of fulfilment. Mr. Lloyd George's offence against the people of his own and of all future generations lay in his giving pledges which could not be redeemed.

For this turpitude no excuse can be suggested; and of explanations there is none less discreditable than that the old electioneering hand could not resist its opportunity and that the old mob-orator played instinctively with the known and proved shortness of the public memory. The allies were not taken unawares by the idea of an armistice: for more than four years they had been declaring their war-aims and modifying them in accordance with the shifts and changes of fortune; their agreement was sealed in successive pacts; the utmost limits of what was possible in monetary payment and

territorial redistribution had been assigned in the elaborate memoranda of countless experts; and, though this work of preparation was speedily abandoned in the turmoil of the Versailles conference, it should have controlled the exuberance of the prime minister's electoral campaign and saved him from the more flagrant forms of bad faith. Though he deceived others, he, a former chancellor of the exchequer, could not have deceived himself with the figures which were proposed as an estimate of German indemnities; and thirteen years' unbroken tenure of office were more than enough to teach a cabinet minister that the asylum which the Dutch government was extending to the ex-Kaiser could not be disturbed save by an unwarrantable declaration of war.

All this could have been explained to the public until the fever of 1918 had abated. There was no need for a general election, and no justification has even been attempted; but the opportunity was irresistible, and the election was conducted on lines calculated to wipe all opposition out of existence. Coalition conservatives and coalition liberals consolidated their alliance by means of a system which offered to candidates the choice of unconditional surrender and of annihilation; ministers constructed their programme of peace from the hysterical savagery of their most violent supporters; and the government swept the country in triumph. It would have made little difference to the result if the independent liberal opposition had shewn the courage and justice to offer an alternative programme, though the unseated liberals might have consoled themselves with the thought that they had fallen in a struggle for honesty and moderation. Against madness so widespread not one dared to raise his voice in protest.

IV

Whether or not electors, who are amateurs in politics, deserve the government which they get, at least they get the government for which they have asked; however disagreeable, this is a necessary part of their political education, and they might be left, philosophically enough, to reap the wild oats that they have sown if the harvest of disaster were confined to their own country and to their own generation. Unhappily, the results of the mad election are more far-reaching: not only is there no guarantee of peace at the end of an unparalleled war, but bad blood has been created between the three powers which, in the absence of an effective league of nations, are responsible for even the temporary peace of the world.

The German army, it is sometimes forgotten, ceased fire on accepting the fourteen points promulgated by President Wilson. Before the British would consent to an armistice, they reserved liberty to alter certain naval provisions; otherwise it was reasonably well understood that the American formula bound President Wilson's associates and limited their utmost demand. At the Versailles conference, as Mr. Maynard Keynes and Mr. Lansing have shewn, the President was outwitted and overruled by M. Clemenceau, who stood for a second Brest-Litovsk peace, and by Mr. Lloyd George, who stood for everything in turn and nothing long. A cynic observed of the completed treaty: "Gentlemen, in this document we are sowing the seeds of a great and durable war"; whatever else may be said of it, no one could easily trace even a faint resemblance to the settlement outlined

in the fourteen points. It was impossible for the British representatives to keep faith at the same time with the president and with their electors; the French prime minister was more in sympathy with the blatant materialism of England than with the intangible idealism of America; and before long Mr. Wilson was first deserted and then overborne.

Though he has since been repudiated by his own people, the divergence of opinion at Versailles has grown into a wide and dangerous antagonism between the peoples of Great Britain and of America; each feels that it has been betrayed by the other; and, so long as the antagonism lasts, there can be no cooperation between the two in world-politics. The ill-feeling is more than the critical and petulant jealousy which breaks out among allies at the end of every war: any one might have foretold that France would impute to Great Britain a niggardly expenditure of men and that Great Britain would resent the price charged by France for the privilege of using her railways, occupying her trenches and finally driving the invaders from her soil; Great Britain and France have agreed privately that Italy has received more in proportion to her sacrifices than any of the allies, that America and Japan have feathered their nests and that the very name of Russia is anathema; and America murmurs that, instead of thanking her for coming to their rescue, the western powers of the old world only calculated how much of their burden in money and casualties could be transferred to the shoulders of the newcomer. There was the same carping after the Napoleonic wars and after the wars of Marlborough.

Between America and Great Britain the antagonism

is deeper-seated because each has lost confidence in the good faith of the other. Who, cries the one, could trust a nation which threw over its own representative and shirked its share in the labour of policing the world? Who, cries the other, could trust a nation which broke faith from the beginning of the war, when it used the plight of Belgium as an excuse for imperial expansion, until the end, when it used the American armistice-terms as an excuse for disarming and despoiling Germany? When once the recriminations begin, every old cause of difference is dragged in to support one or other side; and the vision of a lasting union between the two greatest English-speaking peoples fades from sight and even from imagination. This is the price which the English have to pay—the price which they have also made others pay—for the dishonest election of 1918.

As no protest was heard while the election raged, so, while the peace conference was sitting, the only protest against its activities came in occasional blustering telegrams from self-important members of parliament who conceived themselves to be responsible for keeping the prime minister up to the mark. The great, unpolitical mass of the English people was addressing itself to the new upheaval of demobilisation, to the prospect of hard-won idleness and, more remotely, to the problems of reconstruction; the professional politicians were more concerned with personalities than with principles; and the centre of gravity shifted in 1919 to Paris. Of the great restless army of women who believe that they influence domestic and foreign policy all who could secure a passport and a ticket hurried abroad, there to compete with the cosmopolitan army whose life is an imperceptible gliding from Ritz to Ritz in waiting with loaded

dinner-tables on the fringe of the conference. One staked out a claim on one hotel and statesman, another on another; London, on their return, was filled with stories of their *protégés* and listened patiently to what Colonel House or "Clemmy" had said to each and, less patiently, to what each had said to Mr. Balfour or to President Wilson; all who remembered how the Germans had striven to divide the allies during the war kept a vague look-out for attempts to sow dissension between them in the making of peace and were vaguely comforted by each new proof of solidarity among the high contracting parties. In questions of detail it was agreed that there must be differences of opinion; but, so long as a rupture was avoided, the principles of peace were left to take care of themselves. President Wilson might indeed, with a Disraelian gesture, order his ship to get up steam; but, as he remained at the last moment to see one or two more of his cardinal points rejected by the British and the French, it was assumed that they were impracticable. The treaty was signed on July 19th, and it was not until Mr. Maynard Keynes' *Economic Consequences of the Peace* had been digested that the political army and the camp-followers ceased gossiping about the personalities of the conference and turned their attention to the settlement.

They then discovered that their representatives had imposed on Germany terms which could not be fulfilled and which the fourteen points gave them no right to impose; the league of nations was left as a nebulous aspiration; and the pacific future of the world was based on the twin hope that the central powers were now bled too white ever again to rear an aggressive head and that, if they did, the association of Great Britain, France and

America would endure to beat it once more into the dust. To the old-fashioned system of secret diplomacy, of defensive and offensive alliances, of competition in armaments, of exploitation and intrigue and of "preventive wars"—the system which had given birth to the greatest war in history—the wisdom of the Versailles conference could offer no alternative; the one new idea which it contributed to international politics was that of sharing with America the privilege of suffering again in the future from a system which had lately brought the whole world to the brink of ruin and dissolution.

This privilege the people of the United States declined; and Europe in 1919 differed chiefly from Europe in 1914 by the eclipse of Russia on the one side and of Austro-Hungary on the other. The old system and the old spirit have remained. It does not lie in the mouth of those who threw overboard the fourteen points to reproach those who repudiated the covenant and mandates of the league of nations. President Wilson pretended to more power than he possessed, and his political opponents took their revenge by disowning him; Mr. Lloyd George carried out, so far as he was able, the policy of spoliation and punishment which he had promised to the electors as the price of their support in the election that gave him his revenge on his political opponents.

So the needless, mad war, fed year after year with the life-blood of an entire generation, came to an end in a hopeless, mad peace. If those who cried loudest in their frenzy of greed and revenge got the peace which they deserved, it was not the peace for which one man, turning his back on the splendid promise of youth, had gone forth to die.

CHAPTER XI

DEMOBILISATION

Nelson: What are you thinking, that you speak no word?
Hardy: . . . Thoughts all confused, my lord:—their needs on deck,
Your own sad state, and your unrivalled past;
Mixed up with flashes of old things afar—
Old childish things at home, down Wessex way,
In the snug village under Blackdon Hill
Where I was born. The tumbling stream, the garden,
The placid look of the grey dial there,
Marking unconsciously this bloody hour,
And the red apples on my father's trees,
Just now full ripe.
Nelson: Ay, thus do little things
Steal into my mind, too. But, ah my heart
Knows not your calm philosophy!—There's one—
Come nearer to me, Hardy,—One of all,
As you well guess, pervades my memory now;
She, and my daughter—I speak freely to you.
'Twas good I made that codicil this morning
That you and Blackwood witnessed. Now she rests
Safe on the nation's honour. . . .

THOMAS HARDY: *The Dynasts.*

I

ON the morrow of the armistice the population of the emergency offices was sharply divided into those who wished to leave, but were required to stay, and those who wished to stay, but were required to leave. Though the raising of the blockade was almost automatic, the blockade departments took time to wind up; and the temporary officer was not infrequently

demobilised several months before the temporary civil servant was released.

These days of transition were a time of endless comings and goings, of unexpected returns and abrupt departures. Men who were thought to be dead reappeared suddenly from East and West Africa, from Palestine and India, demanding news of their scattered and decimated friends; women who had been lost to view for nearly five years emerged from hospitals, offices and factories; and all of a stricken generation who had survived set themselves once more to make a career or a livelihood. By now they were in age nearer thirty-five than twenty-five, uprooted and unsettled by the war, with greater experience and smaller hope, more resignation and less resiliency. The time ahead of them was ten years shorter than when they came down from their universities; many had married and begotten children; they could not long afford to wait; their "common problem" was no longer

> "to fancy what were fair in life
> Provided it could be,—but, finding first
> What may be, then find how to make it fair
> Up to" their "means; a very different thing!"

By an oversight, excusable enough in hard-driven ministers who could not be expected to think of everything, no provision had been made by the government to secure that every soldier on leaving the army should be at least no worse off than when he joined it, at the risk of his life, to fight in defence of his country. Machinery was indeed erected for liberating first in order those for whom work was waiting; officers in search of employment were encouraged to submit themselves and their

qualifications to a hastily constructed labour-exchange; the king and Field-Marshal Sir Douglas Haig invited all employers of labour to give preference to ex-service men; funds were collected, speeches were made; and, as it is always impolitic to foster a sense of grievance, even the grievance of hunger, in men who have been drilled to shoot and, in shooting, to hold their own lives cheaply, a system of temporary doles was instituted to bridge the interval until industrial conditions became normal, or, in less pretentious language, until something turned up. Admirable as were these remedies, the demobilized officers and men felt that the hands which had waved them forth to die were chill of touch when extended in welcome to those who had not died after all.

For two years the men who were once so deafeningly acclaimed as heroes that, for their own protection, less heroic but still appreciative patriots were forbidden to stand them drink have been advertising daily for any work that will keep them fed; in times of trade depression they have marched through the streets of London under banners inscribed with the device "WANTED IN 1914: NOT WANTED NOW"; and the passers-by feel that it is very sad (though, to be sure, some of these mendicants are impostors; and, of the unemployed, some are always unemployable), but that, if anything could be done, it would have been done long ago. While it would be foolish to minimise the difficulties of employers who are asked to replace tried men and women with unskilled soldiers, it may be submitted that the government which caused and the society which sanctioned such an upheaval as the late war are responsible for restoring order when war is at an end. If a civilian can within six months be turned into a soldier, the soldier can in little

longer time be turned back into a civilian; as, during his military training, the state maintained him, so it should maintain him while he is being trained for civil work; as he was fed and clothed in camp, so he should be fed and clothed until he is needed in field or mine, office or shop. The voluntary organisations and patriotic appeals are being launched among the descendants of Nelson's countrymen; they have an opportunity of wiping out their great-grandfathers' disgrace. To suggest that the whole community is responsible for the men who have faced death on its behalf is to court the terrific imputation of "socialism"; yet war is the greatest possible socialisation of society, and it is not unreasonable to propose that public responsibility shall continue until the first dislocation of war has been corrected. By now hundreds of thousands have been found employment; but, so long as one suffers from want, the whole community is disgraced. The price of a woman's dress would keep him in affluence for half a year.

In the first weeks of demobilisation the problem was more difficult in that those who needed and wanted work needed and wanted a holiday first. The best-intentioned efforts to regulate or retard the flow of men from the army until there was a sure position for them outside it were met with desertion and mutiny till the sluices were opened wide and only sufficient troops retained to enforce the terms of the armistice. The countries which had been devastated by the war and those which were threatened with ruinous indemnities set to work at once to repair the damage and to build up their resources; England, which had endured as long a strain as any without having iron driven into her soul at the sight of her land laid waste or of her industries ruined,

settled down to drowsy recuperation until the next crisis should rouse her with the threat of financial disaster, revolution or another war.

In those first months of peace there was much talk of "reconstruction,"[1] but the only thing reconstructed at this time was one part of the leisured, social life of the country. To some extent this was inevitable at a time when political interest was centred in Versailles and when a new House of Commons, filled with "hard-faced men who looked as though they had done well out of the war," chafed at the long-continued absence of the prime minister and tinkered with such unimportant legislation as was entrusted to the control of Mr. Bonar Law. In an atmosphere of suspense and unreality, the graver issues were postponed; and all energies were concentrated on creating a life as similar as possible to that which had been interrupted by the war and one in which the war could be forgotten. Foreign and domestic responsibilities, which in a democratic country are the concern of every adult man and woman, were lost to view in the preoccupation of a "Victory Ball" and of the first "peace Ascot." In 1919, for the first time since 1914, there were garden-parties at Buckingham Palace and a gala night at Covent Garden; the Derby was run; great balls were given in historic houses; entertaining and sport reached a perfection and profusion only inferior to 1914 standards in the number of those who, killed or maimed by four and a half years of war, were unable to attend. They, were they able to see the "reconstruction" of the country which they had redeemed and of

[1] One of the last words, in a long list beginning with "Armageddon," to hypnotize the newspaper-reader.

the people whom they had reprieved, would have known at last what they had sacrificed everything to preserve.

II

If at the first calling of the half-forgotten roll they were unable to answer to their names, others stepped quickly forward to take their place. In breaking down social barriers, the war continued and went some distance towards completing a process which had been going on for twenty years. It has already been suggested that, in the last decade of Queen Victoria's reign, "society" was a word with at least a fairly definite negative connotation: certain acts or qualities expelled a man from it; certain other qualities were needed to admit him to an intimate and interrelated community of a few hundred men and women who drew their prestige from land, basked in the sunshine of the court, supplied drafts for the diplomatic service, the foreign office, the brigade of guards, the household cavalry and a chosen few other units and felt neither need nor desire to know any one outside their own world. The first American invasion abolished the pedigree test; later, the monied-cosmopolitan invasion abolished every other. The close corporation was disbanded; and, though a few hostesses received only their old friends—without their old friends' new friends,— the others scattered in search of distraction; and even before the outbreak of war the two essentials in almost every gathering were that wealth should secure the generous minimum of comfort and that brains or eccentricity should provide the amusement. If in 1890 social success could be roughly appraised by the number

of people that a man did not know, in 1920 it was measured by his industry and skill in getting to know everybody: aristocratic London and artistic London, diplomatic London and political London, financial London and theatrical London have all overflowed their old boundaries and now meet in the undefined vast pool of London.

To dwellers in other capitals that is London's distinguishing mark; to many it is, within limits, London's greatest charm: the city is big enough to find room for every one, and each may lead his own life among his own friends. The *rastaquouère* is not penned within his own fold, as in Paris, nor the actress in hers, as in New York; soldier and civilian meet on an equality that would amaze Berlin; Jew and gentile, pre-Conquest family and new rich in a way which Vienna would not tolerate. Diplomats in London have no corporate life of their own; ambassadors and *attachés* scatter and lose themselves in a more numerous community; lawyers, merchants, politicians and newspaper-proprietors are everywhere. Above the super-tax limit London is wholly democratic: those few houses which struggled to exclude all but their owners' friends are one by one being sold or closed; a grave scandal is required to bar the road to court; a title is still to be had without any "damned nonsense of merit."

As society has been diluted, its political power has evaporated. For some years yet the old charm will indeed work fitfully in a country so well trained to the exercise of "influence"; but, outside the sphere of recommendations and minor appointments, the aspirant to office will now carry to Fleet Street the ambitions which in former years he laid on the doorsteps of Downing

Street; when every woman is a "political hostess," the most hardened wire-puller must feel that she does not change the course of history by inviting a labour member to luncheon; the game has become so easy that all can compete without training or practice. Politics were finally desocialised when Mr. Asquith moved to Cavendish Square; they were commercialized and put on a business footing when Mr. Lloyd George took his place. No longer, as in the novels of Mrs. Humphry Ward and in the plays of Oscar Wilde, do high-born undersecretaries and omniscient editors chaffer away state secrets to sinister millionaires and seductive adventuresses at a glittering reception in the townhouse of a cultured duke; it may be doubted if they ever did. Nowadays, politics and the press meet over a hospitable breakfast-cup of coffee in a minister's house or engage in a friendly round of golf, with the minister's press-secretary ever at hand to carry the clubs and to dart back with telephone-messages; at night all take their places at the table of some untiring woman to whom society means the collection, under one roof, of the greatest number of most incongruous guests.

The war lent a powerful impulse to this promiscuity. The old entertaining was perforce suspended; but London still contained several hundred men and women who were bitten with a craving to meet the celebrity of the hour; and war is prolific of celebrities. Every day threw up on the patient shores of England the man who had invented the new collapsible machine-gun, the man who had dropped bombs on Bagdad, the man who knew President Wilson's real feelings, the man whose slim volume of war-sonnets had convulsed the tea-tables of Chelsea. Night after night, they were to be met at din-

ner; as their eyes lost the early dazed look, they became men with a message; later, as their message, whether on Bagdad or the White House, became crisply stereotyped, they faded to the back of the room and made way for some one yet more arresting.[1] Had the heroes of the hour passed like lions in an itinerant menagerie, there would have been no congestion; but, inside the theatre and out, London is loyal to its old favourites.

Thus, by the beginning of the first season after the war, London had so far completed its gradual transformation that its numbers were wholly unmanageable; and, though timid efforts were made to dislodge the tentacles of war friendships, it was easier to break down a barrier than to build one up. The former rulers had deliberately abdicated; and, though a man has only himself to blame for admitting to his house any one of whom he disapproves, nowadays he cannot help meeting in the houses of others many who would not have been tolerated in the stricter days of his youth. The degeneration of society is to be reckoned less by its promiscuity than by its abrogation of all moral standards. It is still true, presumably, that, in a country as much addicted as England to bridge, those who are caught cheating at cards will not be received, though toleration is extended to those who do not pay their card-losses; for any other offence there is no such thing as what used to be called "being turned out of decent society": if one door is closed in a man's face, he has only to go to the next; the enclosure at Ascot may know him no more, but he will be in excellent company outside. No longer is there a

[1] One evening I entered Covent Garden after the curtain had risen. "M. Kerenski?" enquired the sole occupant of the box, peering at me through the gloom. "I beg your pardon! I see that he landed in England this afternoon."

social taboo for the corrupt politician, the fraudulent financier, the habitual drunkard, the sexual pervert and the professional corespondent; to wish for one marks the critic as "old-fashioned" or "provincial"; and, in an age of universal toleration, these are the two moral kinks for which there is no forgiveness. The mad orgy which broke out in 1918 seems, indeed, to have spent itself; but it came to a natural end and was not cut short by the influence or opinion of any individual or group; no one has the power, perhaps no one has the desire to set and to insist on a standard of seemly conduct.

A drawback more serious in the eyes of those who think that life should go with a swing is that the democratisation of society tends to suppress all individuality. There is probably as much wit, charm and wisdom in London to-day as at any time, but over the new vast area it is spread so thin that it is almost imperceptible. The strident egotism and resounding, inverted platitudes with which Oscar Wilde once held dinner-tables in marvelling subjection would now be drowned in the more strident babel of *cliché* patter and the stolen humour of public comedians. The intelligent foreigner, revisiting London after twenty years, would find difficulty in discovering the new great hostesses, the new great conversationalists, the wits, the beauties, even the eccentrics. The most famous Duchess of Devonshire is dead; Stafford House is a museum; where are the new stars shining? Who are the successors to the "Souls"? Among the authors and statesmen, the artists and actors, the soldiers and musicians, the journalists and financiers of the day there is abundant wisdom and wit, their women are sometimes radiantly beautiful; but it would be difficult to name more than six of the younger genera-

tion whose force of personality or strength of lung could prevail over the clatter of a society wherein a machine-gun-fire of colloquialisms, Robeyisms and the signs and countersigns of an exotic group do duty for intellect. Not until society has subdivided into manageable groups will a single weak human voice be able to make itself heard; and, until it is less blatantly vulgar, it would be surprising if a voice worth hearing cared to try.

III

After five years of food-shortage and servant-problems, the country-houses were, in 1919, beginning to open their doors. Everywhere the first year of peace was one of interlude and experiment; as the war was being wound up and the war-machine dismantled, thousands of officers, hundreds of thousands of men were being demobilised; the government-offices, the factories and hospitals were pouring forth their supernumeraries; every one explored cautiously to see how far the old life could be resumed; no one could forecast the condition of public finance, wages, prices or labour a twelvemonth ahead nor predict whether he would be able to keep his house open in a year's time.

Fortunate, in those days, were the few to whom demobilisation meant leisure to continue long-interrupted work; more fortunate the yet smaller company of those who were financially independent of the necessity to join in the hunt for paid appointments. The doctrine that a man's best work is done at the spurring of poverty has lost its former popularity: those to whom creation is a fiercely urgent need will express themselves in sick-

ness and in health, at leisure and in the brief intervals of annihilating labour, when they have to beg for food and to borrow for ink and paper; those who are enervated by comfort and made slothful by luxury have not been impelled by love of creation for its own sake but by creation as a means to soft living and easy applause. The true artist works in spite of himself, the quality of his work is conditioned not by the public market but by his private conscience; and poverty is not so much a spur to his spiritual ambition as a thorn in his material flesh, distracting his mind with squalid cares when he would fain keep it serene and tempting him to youthful prostitution that he may later have the means of living in virtue. "Pot-boiling," writing to order and self-advertising are more commonly the fruit of poverty than is the accomplishment of a masterpiece.

For even the most conscientious, some degree of independence is essential for the free development and play of their genius. Not only must they be secured freedom from interruption and from competing demands on their energy, but they must enjoy full liberty to work as they choose without regarding the blandishments of publishers or the exhortations of critics: the one would restrict them to working a single rich vein until it was exhausted, the other would lop or lengthen them until they fitted the Procrustean bed of the day's fashion. Rightly or wrongly, the creative artist claims to choose his own theme and to treat it in his own way; sooner or later the veering standards of criticism will concentrate upon him a massed attack to resist which he needs the fortitude of independence. At one moment the long novel, pardoned in Dickens, is condemned in De Morgan; at another the novel-sequence, praised in Balzac, is

deplored in Compton Mackenzie; at another, again, the social and political world which Thackeray and Disraeli painted is put out of bounds for Galsworthy. In some years the drab life of grey skies and mean streets is commended as the novelist's single hope of salvation; in others he is urged to study Conrad and the Russians, as Prince Florizel advised the young men in holy orders to study Gaboriau. This urgency the novelist withstands at his peril, for his impenitence is likely to be rebuked with a magisterial reminder that the critics have spoken about this sort of thing before.

The happiest moment in the existence of all who live by their pens must surely be that in which they attain sufficient independence of position, temperament or pocket to write without regarding too much the jeremiads of a publisher or the cautioning of a reviewer; and this happy moment comes earlier and more often into the life of the novelist to-day than at any time since novels were first written. In spite of enhanced cost for producers and of diminished incomes for consumers, the prospects of the novel have never been more bright; the number of those who before the age of thirty enjoy an honourable reputation all over the world has never been higher; and the deference paid in private to the novelist and in public to his opinions has become so great that some may think it exaggerated and undeserved. The columns of the press lie open to him when he wishes to air an opinion of his own subject; and hardly a week passes without bringing him a prepaid telegram in which he is invited to enrich the common stock of thought on any theme from "youth" to "the future of the cinematograph industry." During the war he was the supreme court of appeal in strategy and politics; he is regarded

no less seriously than was the musical-comedy actress of ten years ago; and, when his books are used as the basis of a film scenario, his name is quite frequently printed in company with those of the adapter, the producer and the chief actors.

This last is perhaps a chivalrous concession by the victor to one who continues to put up a game fight. As time and money are limited, it is probable that, when film dramas have worked through their present ingenuous crudity, they will develop at the expense of the novel and of the stage; at present they have much progress to make and, even in their highest imaginable perfection, they will only compete with that novel in which every other ingredient is subordinated to action. At present they are for many novelists a source of unearned increment.

Though the practice of their craft bring, at least to the more fortunate of story-tellers, honour, affluence and friendships more precious than either, most of them find their richest reward in the results of their creative energy. This does not mean the elation which comes to a man when he feels that he can call his work good: such gratification he shares with the painter and the sculptor, the poet and the dramatist; nor does it mean the sensation that, after working at what he loves best and perhaps winning honour and riches from it, he is possibly leaving behind him something that may endure when the tongue of the statesman is silent and when the hand of the surgeon is cold; alone in all the world of art, the novelist, working in rivalry to the first creator, fashions men and women in whosesoever image he pleases and sets them in a garden of his own planning, where with the knowledge of good and evil and with the

power of life and death he controls their destinies and makes the span of their existence long or short. It is impossible for a man to love Balzac or Dickens, Thackeray or Stevenson without taking up his abode in their company: Paris becomes a city wherein he may at any moment encounter Vautrin, Nucingen and Lucien de Rubempré on one night and in one setting of streets and clothes, Pinkerton and Loudon Dodd on another; the infinite spaces of London are star-spangled with the cigar-divan in which the former prince of Bohemia led his Olympian if sedentary existence, with the Goswell Street lodgings from which Mr. Pickwick set out on his journey to Rochester and with the academy in Chiswick at which Becky Sharp, already a lost soul, hurled her copy of Dr. Johnson's "Dixonary." To the novelist of imagination these people and places are more real than the usurpers whom he finds in their stead.

Much more real, however puny the imagination, are the men and women whom he carries so long in the womb of his own fancy. Their features and their clothes, their speech and their mannerisms, the greatness and the meanness of their characters are better known to him than is the single thought of a child to its mother. In their company he withdraws from what others would call "the real world," forgetting alike its general ugliness and its occasional flashes of startling beauty; when he walks abroad and rubs shoulders with the passers-by, he is still in their company, their shadows are more potent than the clumsy substances among which he dodges in and out, their voices ring clear above the drone of traffic and the broken mutter of the street. London, if they were born there, is different from any London that other eyes have seen: an hotel in Piccadilly, crowded with

officers in uniform, is for him the place where before the war the transparent shade of a girl stood at the foot of the stairs to receive the guests at her coming-out ball; a shuttered house in Curzon Street, under renovation for a rich American, is the scene in which an engagement was made or broken off; Pall Mall is overlaid, as in a palimpsest, with imaginary clubs; and the narrow, silent streets behind the Abbey are roused to life by the hoot or jingle of phantom cabs on their way to a political dinner.

It is a world complete in all its generations, all its social grades. They are born and educated, these dream-children; they love and quarrel, marry and separate, make money and lose it, live and die. Another generation presses upward to take their place; but, if, as in life, they are forgotten by the newcomers, they can never be forgotten by the parent who gave them life and who lives among them so continuously that he can shed tears of pity for their imaginary sorrows, while the "real world" of which others speak becomes shrouded in twilight unreality.

Any one who holds that a book—like a picture or a statue—should be its own explanation, grows quickly suspicious of introductions and footnotes; but a defence or even a postulate may be allowed against a school of criticism which threatens the former, late-won freedom of artistic choice. If it be granted that a story-teller may take what theme he likes, it must be granted also that he may tell the story of an epoch as freely as of an episode, the story of a class or nation as freely as of an individual; he may select as his model *War and Peace*, in which Tolstoi chose for subject the life of all Russia under the cloud of the Napoleonic wars; he may copy

Romain Rolland in describing the intellectual history of two generations; he may bow his knee to Balzac, who with superlative genius and daring planned his human comedy to cover no less a subject than the whole of French life under the restored Bourbons. An English author is entitled, if he have the presumption, to write in ten or in fifty volumes, each linked to its predecessor, of the whole English world as it existed before the war and as the war transmuted it; if he make it unreadable, it is his fault; if no one read it, his misfortune; but, so long as ambition remain obdurate, he is unlikely to be persuaded into other paths. If he be independent of sales, he is beyond the reach of fear; if the world into which he withdraws be real to him, he needs no other than this, the story-teller's, reward.

IV

The period of demobilisation, that twelve months' interlude between war and peace, is a convenient time for pausing to take stock of English literary and artistic development since the end of 1914. The æsthetic lives of those who were born in the eighties fall naturally into three divisions; there is first the period in which the Indian summer of Victorian literature paled before the new suns of the nineties; there is then the period in which a quieter and more reasoned revolt against the self-imposed limitations of Victorianism expressed itself in a mood of universal experiment among writers and of universal receptivity among readers; before the second phase had worked to a natural end by discarding novelty for its own sake and by choosing among the new

forms and methods those which yielded the most fruitful results, the third period crashed into existence at the impulse of a war which upset all orderly progress.

It may not be superfluous to recall the names of at least a few of those who occupied the forefront of the stage in 1914. Conrad, after long neglect by all but a tiny *intelligenzia,* had lately come into his own; Galsworthy continued to break new hearts with the exquisite tenderness and beauty of each new book; Wells, no less prolific than versatile, was pouring out an astounding profusion of challenges to religion, official politics, conventional morals, accepted economics and established education, with an occasional glorious lapse into such skylarking as *Boon* and into such immortal comedy as *Mr. Polly;* Bennett, most expert of craftsmen, was completing his great series of giant miniatures and taking an occasional holiday with *The Card* and *The Regent.* At long intervals there came a new volume of Kipling stories, more restrained than of old and lacking the early generous fire. Moore and James had foregone novel-writing for autobiography and the retouching of their earlier work.

It would not be difficult to make a longer list of men with settled and deserved reputations who at this time were continuing to produce work of first-rate technique and achievement; but in 1914, as in 1921, the public was less interested in reading catalogues of names than in looking at the men who had won chief place of honour and in asking who would reign in their stead when they were gone. In a famous article which he contributed before the war to the literary supplement of *The Times,* Henry James discussed the form of some half-dozen of the younger novelists; and, since that date, there has

raged without intermission an informal competition to name the winners among the writers of the future. How far this usurpation of posterity's prerogative diverts a living writer from the unembarrassed prosecution of his work might be argued at length; some may feel that no critic, breathing the same intellectual atmosphere, can pass more than ephemeral judgements on the writers of his generation; the game continues, however, despite the awful example of those who, forty or fifty years ago, tried to place the fame of their own contemporaries beyond challenge, and, if it be regarded as no more than a game in which no finality is possible, it is a harmless intellectual pastime.

In 1914 the younger novelists of promise included Compton Mackenzie and D. H. Lawrence, J. D. Beresford and Hugh Walpole, Gilbert Cannan and W. L. George. The poets received less attention, in part because there were fewer of them and in part because poetry was less read before the war, though Masefield in his narrative poems enjoyed a greater popularity than had befallen any one since Kipling. The younger dramatists were generally ignored: apart from Houghton, Brighouse and Knobloch, few had succeeded in making their names known; and the stage was the almost unraided preserve of Barrie and Shaw, Pinero, Barker, Bennett and Maugham, Sutro and Jones, Carton and Chambers.

The impact of the war, unexpected and incomprehensible, beggaring the resources of language and yet demanding that it should be described and expressed even as it was felt, urged to write those who had not written before and urged those who had written before to write differently. It is not to be expected that the

permanent literary fruits of the war will be seen for another ten years in the work of the younger and more impressionable writers.[1] Young authors of either sex were for the most part engaged in grimmer business than that of writing; and, alike among old and young, balance and perspective are not to be found in a time of dazing shock, of fierce indignation and of numbing grief; the repose in which great work is planned and executed was shattered by the noise of war; calm vision was disturbed by the vivid blaze of sudden contrasts; and, though inspiration has charged the atmosphere, the form in which it will materialise has not yet been revealed. The literature of the last six years should be regarded as contemporary documents to illuminate the psychology of a war in progress rather than as the considered and definite contribution made by the creative artists of a generation which had been shaken by war from the seating of tradition.

Among these contemporary documents many are of the highest quality.[2] *Mr. Britling Sees It Through, Peter Jackson: Cigar Merchant, The Dark Forest, The Pretty Lady, Saint's Progress* and *Naval Occasions* each commemorate, in a way that has not yet been excelled, a phase of experience, an attitude of mind towards the war, a mood of hysteria, a changing ethical standard or an unchanging spirit first interpreted and proclaimed. The authors of these documents were for the most part well known before the war; but the last six years have seen emerging the less familiar names of

[1] At the risk of a prophecy I would suggest that Masefield's *Gallipoli* has a lasting place in the treasury of great English prose, so long, at least, as our present canons of perfection in prose-style are maintained.

[2] I am not limiting myself strictly to those war-books which had been published by the date of the armistice.

E. M. Delafield and Clemence Dane, Stella Benson and Enid Bagnold, Rebecca West and Dorothy Richardson, Frank Swinnerton, St. John Ervine and Eimar O'Duffy. While it is not surprising that war should give an unequalled opportunity to women writers, it is remarkable that in half-a-dozen years six young women of individuality so strong and so distinctive should all have made good their claim to a place in the sun; it is encouraging for the future free development of the English novel.

And individuality is sorely needed at a time when so many writers shelter themselves behind an illustrious model or conceal their native talent by using eccentric tools. In novel-writing the worst original is usually more valuable than the best copy; but the atmospheric effects of Dostoevski and Conrad, the exhaustive analysis of James and the sweeping abruptness of Wells prove too strong a fascination for many young writers. Of late, the study of psycho-analysis has obsessed more than one brain and distorted more than one novel. If a criticism may be ventured on the present phase of novel-writing, it would be that the whole is subordinated to one overgrown part: much is heard of "the novel of realism," "the novel of manners," "the novel of atmosphere," "the novel of psychology"; less of "the novel of perspective." In the hands of the great masters, realism and romance, manners and atmosphere, psychology and discussion had each its allotted place and proportion. It would have been as inconceivable for Thackeray to write a "novel of psychology"—so proclaimed—as for Vardon to play a championship round with a putter. This preoccupation with a single tool has injured the story-teller's art to the extent that the younger generation is less con-

cerned than were the great masters with the business of telling a story.

If poetry be the highest form of literary expression and lyrical poetry the immediate response to the keenest stimulus, it might be expected that the war would have effected a rich output of the most precious material and that we should not have to wait ten years while the shock of war was absorbed. Although, once again, the judgement of a contemporary is impotent to predict what posterity will or should admire, there is a present test by which the poetry of the last six years must be regarded as disappointing: though its technical excellence has seldom been higher and never more widely diffused, it has not been assimilated into the thought, the language or the life of its own generation. While the novels of the war were read, discussed and quoted, while a passage from this one or that may seem the classic description of an episode or the flawless expression of a mood, the poems of the war have seldom caught and held an emotion so inevitably as to pass into the currency of a plain man's daily reflections. Two poems by Rupert Brooke and one by Masefield fix the mingled anguish, wonder and elation of the early days when the world was wrenched from the security of peace; they indeed register a frame of mind as clearly and finally as did *The Loss of the Birkenhead* and may become as much a part of the common stock as did *The Charge of the Light Brigade*. It is difficult to recall another of which the same can be said.

That modern poetry should remain so obstinately divorced from modern sentiment and modern life is the more disappointing in that it has never enjoyed more generous opportunities of making itself heard and ac-

cepted. Poetry is more read and bought than at any time within living memory; its single blossoms, too fragile to burgeon alone, are gathered into yearly anthologies; it is coaxed with prizes and encouraged with unprecedented space in weekly reviews and monthly magazines; but almost always it fades in the season that gave it birth.

The fault does not lie wholly at the door of an unappreciative public, for, though the English submit with incredible docility to the tenth-rate, they welcome the first-rate when they can get it. Within the last six years the normal conservatism of the London stage has been assailed by new writers, new plays and new modes of production. Drinkwater and St. John Ervine have established themselves; the long rule of inanity has been overthrown in places by *The Lost Leader* and *Abraham Lincoln,* by *The Skin Game* and *John Ferguson,* by *The White-headed Boy* and by the revival of *The Beggars' Opera,* all of which reflected as much credit on the audiences as on the authors.

Genius works at unexpected times and in unexplained ways: there is no obvious reason why the last months of the war should have been chosen for an experiment in biography which has upset the old-fashioned biographer's every standard. Lytton Strachey's *Eminent Victorians* occupies a place by itself in the literature of any period. Its wit and irony, its learning and lightness, its humour and mischief make of it a unique literary sport; its appearance at the close of an epoch encourages the hope that, in the new epoch, it will be the model for future biography.

How, then, should this stock-taking at the end of the war be summarised? Among old and young there was

much activity; the former never fell below their standard, the latter gave promise of a standard not less high. The enthusiasm, the conscientiousness, the efficiency and versatility of those who stand in the front rank of contemporary literature are hopeful portents for the future. Into the Jellaby and Postlethwaite game of awarding premature immortality it is foolish to be drawn.

CHAPTER XII

LITERARY TOTEMS

Illa tamen gravior, quae cum discumbere coepit
laudat Vergilium, periturae ignoscit Elissae,
committat vates et comparat, inde Maronem
atque alia parte in trutina suspendit Homerum.
cedunt grammatici, vincuntur rhetores, omnis
turba tacet, nec causidicus nec praeco loquetur,
altera nec mulier. verborum tanta cadit vis,
tot pariter pelves ac tintinnabula dicas
pulsari. jam nemo tubas, nemo aera fatiget;
una laboranti poterit succerrere Lunae.
imponit finem sapiens et rebus honestis;
nam quae docta nimis cupit et facunda videri,
crure tenus medio tunicas succingere debet,
caedere Silvano porcum, quadrante lavari.
non habeat matrona, tibi quae iuncta recumbit,
dicendi genus, aut curvum sermone rotato
torqueat enthymema, nec historias sciat omnes,
sed quaedam ex libris et non intellegat. odi
hanc ego quae repetit volvitque Palaemonis artem
servata semper lege et ratione loquendi
ignotosque mihi tenet antiquaria versus
nec curanda viris opicae castigat amicae
verba: soloecismum liceat fecisse marito.

JUVENAL: Satire VI.

I

WHILE there is excellent authority for the statement that the Holy Roman Empire was not holy nor Roman nor an empire, the reader of mediaeval history has, for a century and a half, been left without an equally trenchant definition of what that empire was. In like manner, while it is comparatively

easy for the student of modern manners to assert that "literary London" is neither London nor literary, he might find it difficult to amplify this in positive terms unless he described it as "cultured Kensington." The first phrase, like its baffling brethren "a man-about-town" and "the Oxford manner," to which reference has already been made, is part of modern currency and is tendered by the press and accepted by the public without a thought on either side whether it represents any value as an idea. Is the literary London to which newspapers refer synonymous with the committee of the Authors' Society? Is it to be found, of a Sunday afternoon, at Mrs. Leo Hunter's house? Does it lurk, unrecognised and fiercely retiring, in that district which cabmen call Chelsea and more poetic spirits "the Latin Quarter of London"?

Or is it but a flight of fancy, like "the upper ten" or "the middle classes"?

Regret is sometimes expressed that there is no assembly in which all men-of-letters can gather and explain—in a phrase beloved of H. G. Wells—"what they are up to." Though the experiment had often been tried, it has always failed. There is, indeed, an abundance of literary societies which meet for dinner and damnable iteration in honour of one or other "immortal memory"; there is a plethora of the larger, looser associations which have been formed to entertain authors and, in sheer lust for culture, to submit to their lectures. There are houses from which no author is long secure; there are clubs, founded to aid their members in life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, where authors meet in large numbers. But there is no one literary clearing-house, there is nothing that can be called "literary Lon-

don." For this, the unreflecting world is not always sufficiently grateful.

The first business of a poet, it may be submitted, is to write poetry rather than to talk about what he has written; the second, to write it by himself, as the pure, unaided expression of his genius, rather than to labour under the limitations and confusions of a school; the third, to let his poetry stand as its own explanation and apology to the critics and to the public. If, in the end, his readers persist in wishing to discuss it with him, he may not always be able to escape, though he may forestall disappointment by warning them that, because a man can express himself on paper, he need not be able to express himself in conversation and that the poet in hours of idleness is not necessarily better worth meeting than the dentist on holiday. This *caveat* once entered, he can offer no further resistance, short of a blunt refusal, to the hostesses who are still eager to secure "the distinguished author" of this or that: sooner or later his neck will be bent over their dinner-tables.

There follows one of two inevitable results: the author, from modesty or self-consciousness, curvets and shies from the one subject which he has been summoned to discuss and takes refuge in the Russian ballet and Ascot;[1] or else he resigns himself to his apotheosis and gobbles more complimentary sugar-plums than are good for his soul's digestion; he is fated to spoil the party or to be spoiled by it.

Next in the preparation of his spiritual downfall comes the bland assumption that the creator must also

[1] "Honestly, I do not care about the clever people," confessed 'Lady Maybury'. "I find them *borné*, self-centred, touchy, and embarrassing. They have *no* conversation, and they always ask me if I was at Ranelagh last Saturday. Have you ever observed that?"

be a critic; when he has adequately descanted upon his own books, he will be required to give an opinion on the books of others. These, unless he loftily (but impressively) refuse to admit that there have been poets since Shelley, he never wholly condemns for fear of seeming vain or small-minded, though he may sometimes admit that he has not had time to read them; it is easier to disparage by flattery and to say that his rival has not yet done his best work or that he will never give rein to his genius until he is less influenced by the spell of Swinburne (within an hour this has been crystallised into the judgement that "X writes such dreadful Swinburne-and-water"); it is easier still to shake a regretful head and to hope that X is not sacrificing Art to Popularity. As a rule the creator-critic praises vehemently, thus gaining for himself a reputation for generosity and doing service to a friend who is doing him the same service at that moment in another part of London. Mutual admiration and log-rolling have not changed since Du Maurier satirised them in the *Punches* of the eighties; and the gentle art of self-advertisement has at least not diminished in the resourcefulness of its technique during the last forty years. There are, however, so many opportunities of securing a wider publicity that the author who shews himself off in a drawing-room is wasting his time and energy: the columns of the press are already open to him, and, as his new book draws near to publication, he can always direct attention to himself by inaugurating a discussion on the pagan tendency of modern poetry or on the victimisation of young poets by unscrupulous editors; he can let himself be persuaded into speaking at public dinners and having his speeches reported; he can be affably at hand when professional

writers of paragraphs are short of copy. If it be his ambition to keep his name before the public, he can without difficulty emulate the methods of one author who backed himself to be mentioned in the press on every day of the year—and won his wager. It may be doubted, nevertheless, whether public or private popularity-seeking is good for the fibre of a man's soul.

If a writer should avoid the food and flattery of the professional lion-hunter, so, for a different reason, he should resist the temptation to closet himself with those who are plying the same trade. If it produce nothing else, the inevitable discussion of himself and of his work produces self-consciousness; and a man will commonly achieve less valuable results by harkening for the applause of a clique or by trying to follow lines and tendencies set by a committee. The great work of art is individual; and, though a painter may have his school, though the technique of painting is usually taught in a school, there is no ground for thinking that a man may be taught to write by those who are themselves learning.

As an author should work by himself to produce what is in him, so, when he has produced it, he should neither explain nor complain. It is perhaps a counsel of perfection to say that authors and critics should never meet. Mr. Walkley has expounded this difficulty in dramatic criticism: is the critic to eschew the actor's company? Is he to rise from the same dinner-table and slay his friend in print? Should he disparage a friend for fear of partiality or praise an unknown playwright because he is unknown? The difficulties are not less great when the novelist and his critic are on terms of friendship; but literature and criticism both suffer when this personal relationship is used to influence the author or the

critic. As a rule the press, turning its back on the brutalities of the early nineteenth century, encourages the new writer and relieves its feelings at the expense of one who is considered to be "established"; in dramatic criticism it generally ignores the newcomer and atones later for its neglect by praising indiscriminately the man who has won his niche. Either practise may be considered as at least no more senseless than any other which criticises the writer rather than the book that he has written. No reasonable man will object so long as criticism is independent of personal obligations, advertisement-revenue, æsthetic prejudice and private predilections; so long, too, as the reviewer is neither a careless young man in a hurry to create on his own account, nor an embittered old man who has tried and failed; so long, finally, as the critic brings to his task as much experience, self-discipline and labour as the author has given to his.

The danger which threatens the deliberate formation of a literary society is that authors and critics will both lose something of their independence. In other callings there is often a rigid etiquette to protect social intercourse from professional abuse: the barrister who dines too regularly with solicitors will expose himself to suspicion, and the surgeon is expected to shew by his demeanour that his guests are friends and not potential patients. Among writers there is no recognised etiquette and, though the man whose friendship with reviewers secures him a good press may be despised by some, he is envied by more. This is no new vice; and its ill effects are limited by the logic of facts, whereby a good press cannot for ever sell bad books. Vested interests in criticism only become formidable to literature

when the spheres of creation and criticism overlap and when critic-creators combine to organise a crusade. The complaint has of late been heard that literary criticism in London is being syndicated: six or eight papers are said to be inspired by four or five critic-creators who set their own standard of taste and value, praise one another's work and advance across literary no-man's-land in massed formation. It is easy to make too much of this. The amiable practise of mutual back-patting has always existed; the honest zealots of literature have always tried to define a formula for exclusive literary salvation; and those who stood outside the ring have always fumed and protested.[1] Is there anything new in Fleet Street? Or in those who accept Fleet Street at a pontifical valuation? When will authors learn how very little influence the press can exert over a book? The favourable review of a good book may hasten its recognition; the unfavourable review of a bad book may retard that measure of success which even the worst book achieves; but, after the first indeterminate months of life, favourable reviews will not sell a bad book, nor unfavourable kill a good.[2]

If, then, an author shews to disadvantage at his apotheosis enforced and if he cannot be left alone with

[1] At Oxford I first heard the couplet which tells how

"From out their different tubs
Stubbs butters Freeman,
Freeman butters Stubbs,"

it was quoted by one member of a prolific triumvirate which then filled a considerable proportion of the critical journals. In those days it was hardly possible to read an article by A which did not contain a panegyric of B's latest book; it was no less difficult to read B's book without meeting a reference to what had been "most justly observed by C."

[2] The volume of hostile reviews, surely too great to be spontaneous and independent, which greeted *The Autobiography of Margot Asquith*, was only less remarkable than the success which the book achieved in spite of them.

fellow-authors lest he preach that his doxy is orthodoxy and that every other doxy is heterodoxy, is there any virtue in a literary clearing-house where any one man of letters can be sure, sooner or later, of finding every other? The *salon* is not acclimatised to London; while it flourishes in Dublin and Paris, it languishes here for want of a hostess to inspire it. Daily and nightly throughout the year there are parties at which eminent men of letters are present in force, with a flanking claque of women who have expressed vague desire to meet them; the general judgement on them is as true now as the particular judgement which Oscar Wilde passed some thirty years ago on "Lady Brandon," who "tried to found a *salon,* and only succeeded in opening a restaurant."

II

If there is no literary London, most men of letters must have encountered a widespread belief that there should be, even that there is. The appropriate atmosphere is sedulously cultivated; undaunted explorers divide the map into private reservations.

Left to themselves and in the absence of a general meeting-place, authors—who are at heart quite normally human, liking and disliking what other men like and dislike—assemble in ordinary clubs and ordinary houses. In the first they are still liable to be from time to time disturbed by an epidemic delusion that they are conversationalists of unusual power and charm: more than one club has suffered from the belief that, because A and B are authors, they must be conversationalists and that, because they are conversationalists, the club must be

exceptionally well worth joining; when the premises are sound, more than one club has been ruined by the reputation of its conversationalists; the performers become occasionally despotic and tiresome; and, as in the long run even club bores die, their death leaves among their mute audiences no one to succeed them.

Despite this recurrent danger, certain clubs stand apart from the rest in the love which they inspire among authors. For them the Athenæum ranks first, with its long list of members who have achieved distinction in literature; and the privilege of membership carries with it, by implication, the honour of having been weighed and found worthy of admission to a society which is without rival, among the clubs of the world, for the volume and variety of its learning. To the Reform Club and to its literary roll from Thackeray to Wells reference has already been made; the Garrick can on occasion mobilise an even braver army of authors; and the Savile list is not to be ignored. To men of more Bohemian intention, the Savage has long made a catholic appeal; and the Beefsteak, with its genius for securing a little of the best of everything, has not disdained the man of letters. The clubs in which a veneration for Dickens or Thackeray, Johnson or Omar Khayyám furnishes a pretext to the members for dining together are too numerous to be set out, but no club or group of clubs can constitute anything that may be called literary London; and, though each may foster friendships which might otherwise have been retarded, it remains true for normal men that the largest number of the pleasantest meetings takes place in private houses where the author is invited as a friend instead of being summoned as a purveyor of

"literary" atmosphere. There is no law against mental vivisection; but authors might welcome one.

It is not necessary to seek a more recondite explanation than that they are wonderfully like the rest of their fellow-creatures and should be treated no differently. They eat and sleep, they marry and beget children, they entertain and are entertained, they serve on juries and pay income-tax, for all the world as though they were bill-brokers and average-adjusters; if they know their own subject as well as a staff-officer and a cotton-spinner know theirs, it takes little longer to discern their limitations. "All mad—but wonderfully decent" was the verdict passed by Master Stubbs, the budding banker, on M. and Mde. Berthelini in *Providence and a Guitar;* but the modern imaginative artist is almost distressingly sane and practical; of the leading English novelists several began as schoolmasters, one or two as barristers, one as a solicitor's clerk, another as a merchant-seaman. It is hard to believe that they enjoy being treated as a class apart. A few, indeed, may wear eccentric clothes, for reasons of health, comfort or eccentricity, but then so do a few cabinet ministers, peers of the realm, civil servants and masters of hounds; a few have pronounced mannerisms, but then so have certain bishops, bankers and family-solicitors. A sparse handful may segregate themselves in an artistic secret society, but this same boyish trait can be found in religion, politics and finance. When the conscientiously eccentric have been eliminated, such authors as are to be found in London incline to the same collective average as any other class: there are bores and prigs, rich and poor, puffed-up and humble, dandies and scarecrows, courtiers and hobbledehoys, fanatics and men of the world; and

it is only when a man differentiates his species by frank advertisement or by less frank posturing about his art that the rest of humanity has to be careful.

Of convincing any one but an author that this contention is true no hope need be entertained: the glamour and mystery of art are as indestructible as the appeal of the stage. An atmosphere is cultivated for the artist and imposed upon him. "With Rothenstein," says Max Beerbohm in his tender study of Enoch Soames, "I paid my first visit to the Bodley Head. By him I was inducted into another haunt of intellect and daring, the domino room of the Café Royal.

"There, on that October evening—there, in that exuberant vista of gilding and crimson velvet set amidst all those opposing mirrors and upholding caryatids, with fumes of tobacco ever rising to the painted and pagan ceiling, and with the hum of presumably cynical conversation broken into so sharply now and again by the clatter of dominoes shuffled on marble tables, I drew a deep breath, and 'This indeed,' said I to myself, 'is life!'

"It was the hour before dinner. We drank vermouth. Those who knew Rothenstein were pointing him out to those who knew him only by name. Men were constantly coming in through the swing-doors and wandering slowly up and down in search of vacant tables, or of tables occupied by friends. One of these rovers interested me because I was sure he wanted to catch Rothenstein's eye. He had twice passed our table, with a hesitating look; but Rothenstein, in the thick of a disquisition on Puvis de Chavannes, had not seen him. He was a stooping, shambling person, rather tall, very pale, with longish and brownish hair. He had a thin vague beard —or rather, he had a chin on which a large number of

hairs weakly curled and clustered to cover its retreat. He was an odd-looking person; but in the 'nineties odd apparitions were more frequent, I think, than they are now. The young writers of that era—and I was sure this man was a writer—strove earnestly to be distinct in aspect. This man had striven unsuccessfully. He wore a soft black hat of clerical kind but of Bohemian intention, and a grey waterproof cape which, perhaps because it was waterproof, failed to be romantic. I decided that 'dim' was the *mot juste* for him. I had already essayed to write, and was immensely keen on the *mot juste,* that Holy Grail of the period. . . ."

Max Beerbohm was writing of 1893; and, though it is presumption to criticise this sketch of the domino room, he has not explicitly described one aspect of the Café Royal which was observable in that year, which is observable still and which, no doubt, will endure as long as the building itself. Though the cape, perhaps because it was waterproof, failed to be romantic, it enclosed a spirit hungry for romance; the Café Royal is still full of souls no less hungry, though it has never yet succeeded in being romantic. Odd apparitions are frequent enough; some writers of this era try to be distinct in aspect; they have not outgrown their keenness for the *mot juste;* and all their spirit's striving is of Bohemian intention. In the hour before dinner vermouth is still drunk; there is still a hum of presumably cynical conversation.

The Café Royal, indeed, changes but little because it satisfies an unchanging need: a literary conception of Bohemian life has created a demand for its embodiment in a "haunt of intellect and daring," tentatively Parisian

if a little self-conscious, very fearless if never quite at ease. Year after year, wide-eyed new generations say to themselves, "This indeed is life." The Café Royal is more than a literary institution, it is a social safety-valve: romance, after its little seething, disappears in steam; an hour's cynical conversation, a glass or two of vermouth, a display of the distinctive aspect enable many a young man to return home healed in spirit to tidy himself and to reappear next morning as a sober, laborious and punctual British subject.

If chance or design closed this safety-valve, the pent passion for romance would be driven inwards until it exploded in the very heart of domesticity. Intellectual adolescence must play at Bohemianism as youth plays at soldiers; it is better to restrict the game to one lawful area than to allow it to rage unconfined, for the English home is not adapted to absinthe-drinking, and a general repudiation of morality shocks without elevating. Under the unsettling influence of war, which closed the Café Royal at night before the taste for literary romance had been satisfied, there was a severe outbreak of studio-parties at which every one shewed himself conscientiously unrestrained and fearless; poets and painters discussed the aims and methods of their art; strange food and drink appeared disconcertingly; conversation was carried on in shouts; there was more colour than line in the dresses; every one sat on the floor until the host gave the signal for dancing; only Virginian cigarettes were smoked; and, at the end, it was never possible to find a taxi. It is to be hoped that the artists worked the better for this breezy liberation of soul; it is to be wished that they had done more and talked less of what they were going to do; but it is to be realised that they were un-

witting and perhaps unwilling victims of a conspiracy to make London literary.

This craving finds its frankest expression in the meetings of certain more formal literary seminars. Here, though the dresses, the intellectual freedom and the insufficiency of chairs are the same, there is strict procedure: the guest of the evening is received with deference and heard with attention; there follows a grave debate in which conventional compliments usher in a set speech of destructive criticism; after a vote of thanks, the address is once more examined in the candid atmosphere of lemonade and sandwiches, and the guest is asked whether he really meant all that he said. Rash is the man who trifles with such earnest desire for improvement: he might well find himself not invited a second time.

III

So much for the atmosphere which is imposed upon an author. If he be more man than peacock, flattery will bring him less gratification than embarrassment; and he may ask in modesty and wrath why he should be subjected to treatment from which others are exempt. The barrister is not forced to expound the principles of pleading to a hushed dinner-table; no one collects a party to meet the chairman of an insurance-company. The answer, presumably, would be that, while there is a legal London and a financial London, no one has yet created a literary London and all are entitled to try.

The initial procedure is commonly the same. Dotted over a wide expanse between Chelsea and St. John's

Wood are scores of houses in which one determined woman has, in the first instance, caught and tamed a single author: he is as much a member of the family as the butler; and his employer would be justly incensed if any one tried to tempt him away with an offer of better wages. At first he is a prize in himself, and in his honour parties are given until his owner has established her reputation as a patron of literature; later he is a decoy for other prizes; and B., who might not come of his own accord, is invited to meet A. Here the artistic ambition is reinforced by the social: the Duchess of Stilton, who has hitherto ignored Mrs. Ponsonby de Tomkyns, is lured by the bait of Mr. Cimabue Brown and Mr. Postlethwaite; and the churl who tosses all invitations unread into his waste-paper-basket may quite possibly do for the Duchess of Stilton what he has always refused to do for Mrs. Ponsonby de Tomkyns. *Noblesse oblige* has been freely rendered: "One must be obliging to duchesses." From this point the game develops automatically; and the triumphant hostess realises her ambition as the acknowledged ruler of one or other postal district of London. If any one would meet this Bloomsbury impressionist or that Hampstead sculptor, he must meet him in her house; she has proclaimed her reservation, and henceforth, so long as she can maintain herself, Westminster or Pimlico, Chelsea or Golders Green, with all that they contain, are hers. Ceasing to court others, she is herself courted.

Whether she is repaid in the result for her necessary first humiliations she alone can decide. Her pretensions are ridiculed by those who accept her hospitality; she is too busy adding to her acquaintances to spare time for making friends; and amid all the insincerity of her life

the one thing brutally sincere is the ingratitude of those who treat her house as a free menagerie. So it has been since the days of Du Maurier; but, in spite of satire and ridicule, her breed continues. Perhaps her only alternative is to look after a husband and children; perhaps she is consoled by the magnitude of her achievement in founding a *salon* on the strength of a resident poet; perhaps she is unconscious of the figure which she cuts. Literary snobbishness is no more attractive than any other kind; and it is to be hoped that she sins of ignorance rather than of malice.

If, no longer hoping, some continue to wish that her breed were less hardy, that is because all efforts to create a literary London inspire misgivings for the free development of literature. It is an author's own fault if he submits to being petted by otherwise sensible men and women who will lavish on novelists, actors, musicians and artists a flattery of which they cannot spare one thousandth part for scientists, philosophers, humanitarians and the great industrial rulers;[1] it is a fault for which he shares responsibility with his maker if he allows his head to be turned by it.

The danger to author and reader from any organised or even stimulated literary discussion is one which he cannot control; and, realising that there is, indisputably, a "musical London" and that its existence has sent musical snobbishness to a premium and the freedom of musical development to a discount, he fears the same fate for literature. It is the common vice of the *salon,* of the

[1] It will not have been forgotten that, in 1920, a cinematograph actress received a welcome to London which may have been equalled by crowned heads, but has, I should think, never been surpassed. Wherever she went, the streets were thronged; in its desire to see her, the crowd at a theatrical garden party nearly crushed her to death. Would Madame Curie, I wonder, have secured a single cheer? Would Miss Nightingale have been recognised?

critical syndicate (if such exist) and of any unofficial "academy" that they tend equally to pass premature judgements and to force uniformity upon the hangers-on. They hustle their heroes into the Pantheon or the pauper-grave before life is out of their bodies. Prizes are now awarded for the best imaginative work of the year. The critics are already trying to decide which of the younger men and women are qualified to succeed H. G. Wells and Arnold Bennett. Macaulay himself could not have displayed a wilder passion for class-lists and labels.

Side by side with the thoughtful articles which undertake to spot literary winners are articles no more thoughtful but perhaps playfully philosophical in which to-day's tipsters expose the folly of their predecessors. Who now reads Mrs. Humphry Ward? Yet it is less than forty years since *Robert Elsmere* marked her out as the successor to George Eliot. Who now reads George Eliot? "Herbert Spencer," recalls Mr. Edmund Gosse, ". . . expressed a strong objection to the purchase of fiction, and wished that for the London library no novels should be bought 'except, of course, those of George Eliot.' While she lived, critics compared her with Goethe, but to the disadvantage of the sage of Weimar . . . For Lord Acton at her death 'the sun had gone out'; and that exceedingly dogmatic historian observed, *ex cathedra,* that no writer had 'ever lived who had anything like her power of manifold but disinterested and impartial sympathy. If Sophocles or Cervantes had lived in the light of our culture, if Dante had prospered like Manzoni, George Eliot might have had a rival.' It is very dangerous," adds Mr. Gosse judiciously, "to write like that . . ."

In fifty years' time will any one read Herbert Spencer? Or Lord Acton?[1] It was stated at the time of George Meredith's death that his executors refused for him the honour of burial in Westminster Abbey because one of them believed that in a hundred years' time he would be unread; his admirers are even now divided over the question whether he was a great novelist who wrote less great poetry or a great poet who wrote less great novels. The same fate lies ahead of Thomas Hardy. Battle has already been joined over the body of Henry James: to one school he is the great analytical psychologist who revolutionised novel-writing, the perfect artist, the subtile craftsman with the inimitably personal style; to another he is the pretentious, untidy amateur, the man who never learned to select or to compress, the pompous pet of a Chelsea group, the windy impostor with thumbs for fingers who partially buried under involution his lack of style and his ignorance of punctuation. One school swears by "the novels of the middle period"; another harks back to *Roderick Hudson;* a third prays *The Turn of the Screw* in aid and proclaims him less a novelist than a master of the short story; one of the three most highly esteemed living English novelists likens him to an elephant trying to pick up peas with its trunk; and he was decorated with the Order of Merit.

What hardly any one will do is to suspend judgement; and the first business of literary society is to ensure that judgement shall not be suspended. Not only has a label

[1] The temptation to make class-lists is almost irresistible: I have been taken to task for saying in an introduction to Couperus' *Old People and the Things That Pass* that it was one of the world's half-dozen greatest novels; but the temptation should be resisted, for the proof of our fallibility is ever before our eyes.

to be fixed, but the humblest amateur feels obliged to say whether it was rightly fixed: praise and proscription are bandied among those who have hardly learned to read and those who have never been trained to think. When the Henry James cult became fashionable, he received equally rapt devotion from those who disliked him, from those who did not understand him and from those who had not read him. James was elevated into a literary standard; he collected a following of disciples; those who flattered him by imitation were flattered in turn by his frank approval. The bellow of the herd drowned the voice of the individual. In all the calendar of critical crime there is no more soul-destroying dishonesty than a second-hand opinion.

IV

The same premature labelling may be seen in "musical London" with the appearance of every new composer and the exhumation of every old score. While Verdi is tolerated and Gounod deplored, Ravel is—at the moment—a safe winner, and a liking for Delius commands respect, Debussy holds his own; Richard Strauss is still a bone of friendly contention; de Lara and Ethel Smyth are encouraged as British composers by a perplexed audience which has been taught to distrust British compositions; but "musical London" has decided that it is time for a reaction against Puccini.

Does "musical London" ever turn an introspective eye to watch the manufacture of musical opinion? The spectator who wanders from box to box on the first night of a new opera, may see the gentle herd-hypnotism at work.

The Honest Ignoramus, who goes to Covent Garden to see his friends between the acts. "Well, what d'you think of it?"

The Languid Woman who will not give herself away. "I heard it in Monte Carlo, you know, this winter."

A Voice. It's a pure crib from *The Barber.*

Another. Rossini and water.

Another. It's quite too deliciously old-fashioned.

The Honest Ignoramus strays into the next box, shedding some of his honesty by the way. "Rather Rossini and water, don't you think? I don't know anything about it, of course, but it seemed to *me* a mere up-to-date *Barber.*"

A Voice. It's very modern certainly. I confess I'm rather old-fashioned . . .

He moves on. "D'you like all this modern stuff? If we *are* to have Rossini——"

A Voice (*impressively*). He gets no value from his orchestra . . . Rossini? Who's talking about Rossini? . . .

He beats a retreat and recuperates in the corridor.

A Voice. I was lunching with George to-day. He'd been to one of the rehearsals and he said that no one since Wagner had understood the wood-wind like this man. A pure genius. I'm giving you his actual words. Whether it'll *pay* I can't tell. It's rather modern for Covent Garden . . .

The Honest Ignoramus returns to the first box. "Only one more act? I'm rather enjoying this. I suppose some people would call it a bit modern, but it's rather a relief to find a man who's not afraid to use his orchestra. The, er, wood-wind . . ."

All (*gratefully*). "Too wonderful! . . . Were you here on Thursday? . . ."

The press-notices next day will add a few more technical terms, but regular attendants at the opera can say whether this is a caricature of the manner in which contemporary musical opinion is formed.[1] None will wait to think; few will shew the courage to express their own unsupported feelings; every one will pass a criticism of some kind. And, when the aggregate judgement has been launched, all will be half converted to it. Perhaps only financial good or harm is done to a contemporary work, but "musical London" will not so circumscribe its criticism: there must be an opinion on everything, a label for every one; and against the verdict of the hour there is, in all eternity, no appeal.

Here, indeed, is the weakness of all artistic criticism: the critic is as greatly influenced by atmosphere, fashion and the æsthetic limitations of a period as the creator; sometimes it is the same atmosphere, and each new novel by George Eliot was acclaimed a classic because her critics believed as strongly in her formula as she did; sometimes the atmosphere is different, and readers in this generation may praise Wordsworth and belittle Byron as vehemently as another generation praised Byron and belittled Wordsworth. Will it never be understood that in æsthetic taste there can be no finality?

There is little harm in awarding a Nobel or a Hawthornden prize if we remember that the judges are breathing the same atmosphere as the candidates and that their verdict concerns an author of their own gen-

[1] On the first night of *L'Heure espagnole* a devil entered into one member of the audience and tempted him to murmur at any open door: "Is this not extraordinarily reminiscent of Aïda?" Complete and immediate agreement was his reward.

eration; in forty years' time their taste may seem as grotesquely perverted as that of the mid-Victorians who exhausted their superlatives on George Eliot or of the assassin who struck down Keats. That is the price exacted of the critic by posterity for the infallibility which he enjoys in his lifetime. The harm is done when these verdicts are accepted at second-hand by a public which has not read the evidence nor heard the trial. It is neither practicable nor desirable that the work of to-day should be pusillanimously referred to the judgement of to-morrow; but an artistic assessment, to have any value, must be the sum of individual and independent opinions. That independence would disappear with the birth of a literary London. The propaganda of a coterie, the direction of critics, the explanations of authors and the herd-voice of literary society narrow artistic sympathy and stunt artistic originality. Long may England be spared the unofficial Academy.

CHAPTER XIII

POLITICS IN A DISSOLVING VIEW

Often when warring for he wist not what,
An enemy-soldier, passing by one weak,
Has tendered water, wiped the burning cheek,
And cooled the lips so black and clammed and hot;

Then gone his way, and maybe quite forgot
The deed of grace amid the roar and reek;
Yet larger vision than the tongue can speak
He there has reached, although he has known it not

For natural mindsight, triumphing in the act
Over the throes of artificial rage,
Has thuswise muffled victory's peal of pride,
Rended to ribands policy's specious page
That deals but with evasion, code, and pact,
And war's apology wholly stultified.

1915. THOMAS HARDY: *"Often When Warring."*

I

IN the life of the English generation which found its climax and catastrophe in the war, the last chapter opened on armistice day and closed with the signature of the German peace treaty on July 19th, 1919. As with the armistice terms, so with the treaty: no one doubted that it would be signed, but, until it had been signed, all efforts at reconstruction, all attempts to resume a normal life of peace were tentative and provisional. The House of Commons in effect declared a legislative moratorium and, in the absence of the prime

minister, marked time to the command of Mr. Bonar Law with the disciplined noise and the calculated absence of progress inseparable from that part of infantry drill.

As the general election of the previous December had been won on the cry that a coalition was necessary to the conclusion of a lasting peace, it might have been expected that the supporters of the coalition would have influenced the course of the peace negotiations. Beyond an occasional question, however, which seldom brought enlightenment to the questioner, and an occasional telegram of protest which can never have brought satisfaction to the protester, coalition members gave the government a free hand. In part, there were comparatively few with any parliamentary experience; in part, there was none who could draft a desirable alternative ministry, if his dissatisfaction with the present prime minister stimulated him to effective revolt; and, in part, there has probably never, since 1832, been a House of Commons so bankrupt in public spirit, courage, independence or conscience. Since the end of 1918 the government has triumphantly carried its supporters against their inclinations through a dozen crises of which any single one would have seen any other ministry disowned and broken by a less servile house: the peace treaty with Germany, as mischievous as it was dishonourable, was flung at parliament with an air of "Take it—or leave it and take the consequences"; the treaty with Turkey established the Ottoman government in Constantinople with licence to misgovern and to massacre as freely as in the past; the Russian policy began with invective and threats of war against the bloody-handed soviet and ended with the cordial grip of a hand which had only become more bloody in the interval; Ireland drifted

through pats of conciliation and dabs of coercion to a state of anarchy which ministers hoped to end by means of a new home rule bill abhorred by every section of Irishmen; and, while financiers protested that the country had reached its taxable capacity, the government continued to live beyond its means and the chancellor of the exchequer complained that it was not in his power to retrench effectively.

For a similar display of cynical incompetence and reckless disorder the historian must go back to the days of a great autocracy in dissolution. The government of Louis XVI or of the last Roman emperor, would perhaps shew an equal record of vacillations, lethargy and light-hearted misrule; but in both instances anarchy ended in downfall; and, if history be past politics, present politics are future history. It is hardly straining the parallel to suggest that such misgovernment is always attributable to one cause, the lack of an efficient opposition; a composite government unchecked by fear of overthrow and uninspired by any loftier ideal than a groping instinct of self-preservation, is no less tyrannical and prone to abuse than a single ruler.

"These various Cæsars and their successors and their women-kind," says H. G. Wells, "were probably no worse essentially than most weak and passionate human beings, but they had no real religion, being themselves gods; they had no wide knowledge on which to build high ambitions, their women were fierce and almost illiterate, and they were under no restraints of law or custom. They were surrounded by creatures ready to stimulate their slightest wishes and to translate their vaguest impulses into action. What are mere passing black

thoughts and angry impulses with most of us became therefore deeds with them. Before a man condemns Nero as a different species of being from himself, he should examine his own secret thoughts very carefully."

It is less profitable to condemn the present government than to enquire why there has been no effective opposition to hold it in check. The political revolution which placed Mr. Lloyd George in power was described by Mr. Asquith as a "conspiracy"; it was generally regarded as a discreditable piece of trickery, and even the stalwarts of the new order were for the most part reduced to mumbling that the end must justify the means and that, without a change, the war would have dragged on for ever. It is possible to see now that a psychological crisis was reached in December 1916 and that after more than two years of unending and unended fighting the herd-instinct demanded that someone should be made responsible. To the bulk of the liberal party who stood by Mr. Asquith, forgiving his high-handed behaviour in resigning without an adverse vote and without consultation of his supporters, the December crisis seemed a trial of strength between two men; it was believed first that no alternative ministry could be formed and then that it could not endure; the opposition liberals would have been more than human if they had cherished no hope of revenge; and they could claim disinterestedly and honestly that the new prime minister was at least not superior to the old in scruple and was certainly inferior in ability.

However great their resentment, however, the new management had to be given a trial; any show of factiousness would have been doubtful patriotism and

disastrous tactics; and the chief subject of discussion among the wire-pullers was how long the trial should continue. Much noise and dust accompanied Mr. Lloyd George's triumphal progress to No. 10 Downing Street; at last a "business government" had taken office, and Whitehall became filled with the unfamiliar forms of shipping-men and railway-men, newspaper-men and mining-men, all disciplined by practical experience at the head of great commercial enterprises, though unschooled to the team-work of administration in which the pace and independence of each are regulated by his fellows. For a moment the political crisis seemed a successful *bourgeois* protest against the spirit and methods of Balliol: neither Mr. Lloyd George nor Lord Beaverbrook, neither Lord Northcliffe nor Lord Rothermere, neither Sir Eric Geddes nor Sir Joseph Maclay, neither Lord Rhondda nor Mr. Neville Chamberlain was a Balliol man; and in his strength and in his weakness, in his mechanical efficiency and blank want of imagination, in his intellectual aloofness and touching belief that others too observed an Oxford standard of honour, Mr. Asquith was a typical product of Balliol.[1]

Nevertheless, when the dust and noise of removal had abated, there were found to be at least as many defects of administration as before; the wizard's wand failed to charm food from air or to conjure up men from the vasty deep in place of those who were being sent to rot in Salonica; the German front remained impregnable in the west; the new war-cabinet, for all its dash and fire, was "too late" to prevent the Russian revolution; and

[1] *Naturam expellas furca, tamen usque recurret.* It is natural for Balliol to gravitate to the cabinet; and distinction was lent to the business government by the presence of Lord Curzon.

German submarine-commanders, perhaps in ignorance of the change that had taken place, continued to sink allied and neutral shipping. No improvement was observable until the United States entered the war; and the warmest panegyrist of the new government has never suggested that the credit for this decision should be given to the new prime minister. Those who look for a single principle or detail in which the second coalition varied the policy of the first are rewarded with an encomium on the blessings of a unified command; but official rhetoric did not conceal that the French were being given, with much advertising display, what was waiting for them whenever they chose to ask for it; and, if this be Mr. Lloyd George's sole innovation, the assertion that he won the war stands in need of revision, the more so since the publication of the memorandum in which Lord Milner, who was sent to "report," is shewn to have carried out the unification of command on his own responsibility and without reference to the prime minister.[1] Liberals of the rank and file, growing weary

[1] *Memorandum*

TO THE CABINET BY LORD MILNER ON HIS VISIT TO FRANCE, INCLUDING THE CONFERENCE AT DOULLENS, MARCH 26TH, 1918.

The Prime Minister having asked me to run over to France in order to report to the Cabinet personally on the position of affairs there, I left Charing Cross at 12.50 on Sunday, March 24th. . . .

On arrival at Doullens I was at once seized by Clemenceau, who startled me by the announcement that Haig had just declared that he would be obliged to uncover Amiens and fall back on the Channel ports. I told him I felt sure there must be some misunderstanding about this, and that before the general Conference I thought it was desirable that I should have a short conversation with the Field-Marshal and the Army Commanders, whom I had not yet seen. . . .

The views of the British Commanders having thus been cleared up, the Conference assembled. . . . I asked whether I might have a word with Clemenceau alone. I then told him quite frankly of the conviction which had been growing in my mind ever since the previous day, and had been confirmed by my conversations with Wilson and Haig, that Foch appeared to me to be the man who had the greatest grasp of the situation, and was most likely to deal with it with the intensest energy. Could not he be

of phrases about "instant daily decisions" and the advantage of "doing it now," over "waiting and seeing," found so little improvement abroad and so much calamitous disorder at home that within six months the new management seemed to have had a long enough trial: in that time cabinet rule had been abolished, nothing had been put in its place and the empire was at the mercy of half-a-dozen men who were alike only in the distrust which they aroused. From time to time the more ardent liberal skirmishers criticised the government; but their enthusiasm was damped by consistent failure to "make the red-hats go over the top"; it was finally destroyed by the faint-hearted attack of their leaders when at last they called ministers to account in 1918.

The "Maurice Debate" is of party importance in

placed by both the Governments in a position of general control, and given the sort of authority which he (Foch) had himself suggested to Wilson? Clemenceau, whose own mind, I am sure, had been steadily moving in the same direction, at once agreed, but he asked for a few minutes to speak to Pétain. While he took Pétain aside, I did the same with Haig. While I explained to the latter what was contemplated, he seemed not only quite willing, but really pleased. Meanwhile, Clemenceau had spoken to Pétain, and immediately wrote and handed me the following form of words, to embody what he and I had just agreed to:

Le général Foch est chargé par les gouvernements britanniques et français de coordonner l'action des armées britanniques et françaises sur le front ouest. Il s'entendra à cet effet avec les deux généraux en chef, qui sont invités à lui fournir tous les renseignements nécessaires.

I showed this to Haig, who readily accepted it, but suggested that it should be extended to cover the other armies—Belgian, American and possibly Italian—that might be employed on the present Franco-British front. To this Clemenceau at once agreed. We then all went back to the table. The amended formula, which ran as follows:

Le général Foch est chargé par les gouvernements britanniques et français de coordonner l'action des armées alliées sur le front ouest. Il s'entendra à cet effet avec les généraux en chef, qui sont invités à lui fournir tous les renseignements nécessaires.

DOULLENS,

le 26 mars, 1918.

was read out, and after a very short discussion, which amounted to nothing more than cordial approval of the principle by all the speakers, the document was signed by Clemenceau and myself, and the Conference immediately rose with every appearance of general satisfaction. . . .

This quotation is taken from the special supplement to *The New Statesman* of 23 April, 1921.

registering the death of the liberal party; it had indeed breathed its last eighteen months before, but the certificate was only written when Mr. Asquith was defeated on a division which challenged the honour of the prime minister and certain of his colleagues. Since the party meeting at the Reform Club on December 8th 1916 some of the more enterprising had snatched at office, others awaited their turn; of those who still sat on the opposition benches several were transferring their energies to commerce; and the division lists shewed that all but a faithful ninety-nine voted with the government or abstained from voting. For the next and last six months of the parliament's life, Mr. Lloyd George had nothing to fear in the House of Commons from the man whom he had supplanted.

Following up his advantage, he took care in December that he should have nothing to fear from Mr. Asquith in the country. He that was not with the prime minister was against the man who had won the war and who aspired now to win the peace; there was no room for independence or qualification; a candidate went to victory with a "coupon" or to defeat without it. At such a time there was no lead or guidance from "old gang" headquarters; no alternative programme was offered; and the bemused elector was left to imagine that the liberals who refused the "coupon" without putting forward a policy of their own were plotting an assassin's war against a man whom they dared not fight openly. The coalition swept the country; the old liberal ministers were hurled from seats which some had occupied for a generation; and, as empty benches have their value in a division, the ministerial majority was strengthened by every vacant place once filled, before the Sinn Fein land-

slide, by a nationalist. So complete was the rout that, when Sir Donald Maclean and his scarred following of "Asquithian liberals" took their seats, the labour party challenged his right to be considered the leader of the opposition.

II

Since the general election a few seats have been won by "old gang" candidates; the liberal associations in the country have denounced Mr. Lloyd George, his followers and all their works; and Mr. Asquith has returned to the House as member for Paisley. The liberal party, however, is more deeply divided than ever; and an autocratic ministry has established itself so firmly that, while no one can defend its misgovernment, no one can shake it from its seat. The coalition liberals who parted from their old leader in despair or disgust cannot be detached; the party which was so wantonly shattered cannot be reconstructed; and, while the opposition remains numerically small and impotent in all but voice, the strange bed-fellows of the coalition cling comfortably to what they have lest a worse fate overtake them. Efforts have been made to "fuse" liberals and conservatives into one permanent union; and, though the organizations outside the House refuse to blend, the ministers within have contrived to discard the old shibboleths which in other days set men and parties in antagonism.

The personnel of the ministry demands a moment's scrutiny. It was composed of liberals and conservatives, of the older statesmen and the young, in roughly equal numbers; it included one or two men, such as Mr. Fisher and Sir Robert Horne, who were new to political life

and who were first-rate administrators rather than first-rate party men: while a coalition is fortunate in being able to draw upon two sources of political talent, it is less fortunate in having to recognise two party debts instead of one, and Mr. Lloyd George's second ministry contained probably more men of third-rate ability than any in modern history; the experiment of giving office to "business men" was not an unqualified success, and before long only Sir Eric Geddes remained in an embryonic department where he was spared the perhaps inevitable friction that occurs when a business man is brought in contact with civil servants. Labour has withdrawn from the coalition; the Irish members, with the exception of Sir Edward Carson, never entered it. When the first cabinet was formed in 1916, two of the appointments most strongly criticised were those of Lord Curzon and Lord Milner, who were felt to have failed in India and South Africa respectively and to be antagonistic to those ideals of democracy and nationalism for which, in theory, the war was being fought; it was added that Lord Milner was of German extraction. No one criticises them now, for nationalism and democracy have lost in public interest; but the cynic, with a recollection of former party divisions, may smile at the spectacle of Lord Curzon of Kedleston holding office under Mr. Lloyd George of Criccieth.

The government has proved itself more varied than strong; but pure conservatism, pure liberalism and pure labour have been unable to organise an alternative. The attempt to perpetuate the coalition by fusing liberals and conservatives into a "centre party" was perhaps given new vigour by the fear that the liberal party would coalesce with labour. There is an engaging be-

lief among statisticians and poets that they are the born leaders of nascent democracy, and few popular movements are long secure from their help and guidance: at the time of the 1918 general election Mr. Sidney Webb and Sir Leo Chiozza-Money staked out their claim. They were followed by an eager rush of itinerant intellectuals who were eager to sign on before a monopoly could be established. Soon a new formula was constructed for political grouping: the labour party was to be the party of "earned incomes," and the vast liberal and conservative middle-class of men and women engaged in commercial and "professional" work was at liberty to enter it.

Though the invitation has not as yet been widely accepted, there have been some recruits to labour, and more will no doubt come in; to the historian the interest of this projected fusion lies in the change which it marks in political idealism. The old liberal creed would seem to be forfeiting the sympathy of its last supporters; politics are losing their soul; and material self-interest is being made the touchstone of government. It was perhaps inevitable that there should be a move in this direction at the end of a war which disturbed the financial equilibrium of every one in the country; inevitable, too, that more altruistic counsels should have to wait for a hearing until each man had done the best for himself in the licenced scramble which economists call the "distribution of wealth" and the "apportionment of taxation." The problems of the future, it is urged, are economic; in England at least there is now as much personal and religious liberty as any one cares to enjoy; foreign politics only become interesting as they precipitate or avert war; and war is over for the present. In

their existing state of physical and nervous exhaustion the inarticulate millions are concerned only to attain the highest possible level of personal comfort and to bask there with the greatest possible degree of security. They are profoundly interested in wages and prices, but here their political interest stops short. Until it is seen whether this narrowing of political outlook is likely to be permanent, liberals will occupy themselves more profitably in studying it intelligently than in deploring it self-righteously. They must recognise that for the present at least the electors are considering every issue in terms of money; to nationalisation of industry they are applying the test: will it make living cheaper or dearer? So with a crusade against soviet government. So with the imperial mission of Great Britain in Mesopotamia. So with Free Trade. So with the resumption of commercial relations with Russia. It is only at Westminster that the nervous party organisers wonder whether the middle classes will "vote labour," whether the "old gang" can retain its hold on the liberal machine in the country, whether Mr. Lloyd George can form a new party and collect funds. The electors will vote at the prompting of their pockets. If they have not broken down the familiar lines of party division, it is because they are not deceived by any talk of a party which is to contain all the "earned incomes" and realise that there is no true distinction between incomes earned or unearned; taxation falls on the people with money, however acquired. They are as little deceived by warnings about "Bolshevism" and suspect that it is all a dodge to make their flesh creep. England, they feel, does not love revolutions and has a blind, stupid instinct for avoiding them; preeminently by never allowing too large a proportion

of the population to become too hungry at the same time; prices indeed are high, but wages have risen to meet them; when trade has recovered after the war, prices will fall, but wages will tend to remain constant; the poorer classes will find themselves richer, the rich poorer; an immense economic revolution will have taken place without a single soviet. Every one is concerned to safeguard his own position.

Though political interest in England has sunk to low-water mark in one direction, it has risen alarmingly in another. The national tradition of describing parliament as a "talking-shop" and of demanding machines or men who will *"do* something" may indicate some little confusion of thought among those who would make a deliberative assembly executive, but it prepares the way for a great constitutional change when men discover more certain and less dilatory methods of "doing something" than by parliamentary means; interest has shifted from the House of Commons to Fleet Street, to Unity House, to the periodical conferences of labour and, indeed, to any mass-meeting convened for any purpose by men or women who are in earnest about anything. Representative government is breaking down; direct government threatens to take its place; and the gravest problem of domestic statesmanship is to restore faith in parliamentary institutions.

III

This temporary dislocation is no new phenomenon. The reform bill of 1867 became a serious part of the ministerial programme when a London mob pulled up

the railings of Hyde Park: that was direct pressure from below. Direct pressure from above came when Mr. Gladstone appealed, over the head of some four hundred critical, angular supporters, to vast mass-meetings throughout the country; their verdict and sanction overrode the authority of the discreet representatives who had been returned to interpret the will of the people; representative government yielded place, on occasion, to a direct mandate, to an informal referendum: in a word, to direct democracy. And, as democracy became articulate through the press and through public meetings, the doctrine was born that every political change must be inaugurated by a press and popular campaign.

In the last six years every political revolution has been forced on the House of Commons from outside. The constitutional passage of home rule was checked in 1914 by a threat of military rebellion and popular violence; the suffrage was extended to women as the reward of their extra-parliamentary agitation and in the teeth of press and popular opinion; war with Bolshevist Russia was stopped by the labour party, outside the House; and Ireland, despairing of help or leadership from England, has set up a Sinn Fein government. In one form or another this is "direct action"; and "direct action" is the *ultima ratio* of the governed against their governors when the elected representatives slip beyond the control of their electors. The course of legislation and of foreign politics is now determined by a series of political strikes. In 1920, the labour party tried its hand on a solution of the Irish problem. Certain railway workers refused to carry munitions for the government. The National Union of Railway Workers was urged to sup-

port this local strike and to declare a general strike if the government tried to run the Irish railways with the help of engineers working under military discipline. Here, if it had chosen to throw down the challenge, organised labour would have met and contended with the executive of representative government on the highest plane. Mr. J. H. Thomas shewed the statesmanship to avert or postpone this conflict by asking the prime minister to receive a deputation to discuss an Irish settlement from the standpoint of labour.

At least for a time parliament has been superseded by the direct action of men who find themselves impotent as parliamentary electors but powerful—perhaps, in the future, all-powerful—as the mechanicians of the communal life. This change from constitutionalism to direct action, from representation to control at first hand, is too grave to be ignored. As men meet primarily in human associations for the comforts of life, they defeat the object of their association by encouraging or condoning trials of strength which establish nothing but the momentary triumph of the moment's victor; what has been secured by the railway strike of 1919 beyond the knowledge that the railwaymen can to a great extent paralyse the activity of the country and that the rest of the community can to a great extent improvise means and services for preventing complete paralysis?

It is more than time alike for employers and employed to realise that they are the servants of the public: as every strike comes to an end at some time and on some terms, there is no reason in equity why a strike should ever begin; if the individual submits—and cheerfully submits—his honour, life and fortune to the arbitrament of a judge and jury, every man or body of men who

will not submit an industrial dispute to a similar tribunal is suspected of having discarded equity in favour of the doctrine that might, however temporary, is right. Employers and employed will only win public sympathy, if indeed they care to have it, when they agree to compulsory arbitration backed by the severest penalties for breach of agreement; the status of both is at present that of a robber-baron. It is more than time, too, for masters and men in any one industry to realise that they represent but a small proportion of the organised capital and labour in the country, a yet smaller proportion of the total life and wealth of the community.

More needful even than the divorce between militant politics and militant economics is the reestablishment of public order.

As the policeman is a symbol, as organised society depends far less on the executive officers of the law than on respect for the law, nothing but chaos can be expected of any successful resistance to law. When the law-breaker goes not only unpunished but rewarded and honoured, can it be expected that others will not follow in the footsteps of those who have risen by anarchy to be lord chancellor, lord of appeal, chancellor of the exchequer and leader of the Ulster party? The privy councillor who preaches and prepares armed resistance to law, the suffragette who breaks a window, the employer or the workman who breaks a contract, the conscientious objector who repudiates any liability that the soveran government may impose upon him is a danger, by contact and example, to the whole state, a mad dog whose extirpation is the first duty of all who value the stability of the state. Here, as everywhere, popular judgement is warped by social and intellectual snobbish-

ness: the "passive resister," whose "nonconformist conscience" forbade his paying rates for the support of Church of England teaching was an object of impatient scorn; the lady of rank who declined to lick insurance-stamps at the bidding of a little Welsh attorney was a woman of pride and independence; the officers who threatened mutiny and the civilians who took up arms against home rule were regarded as heroes; but the men who preferred prisons and obloquy to the necessity of trying to take the life of their country's enemies were branded as traitors and cowards. There can only be one equitable rule: so long as a man remains a member of any community—nation, church, profession or club—he must submit scrupulously to its rules and only seek to change them by constitutional means.

But, inasmuch as constitutional government is the art of understanding and coordinating to a common end human beings who are at once above and below the mute, mechanical conscripts of an autocracy, the governors have to make obedience easy by making government human. In the twentieth century man is too imaginative and too little servile to worship the inexorable soveranty of Hobbes' *Leviathan.* Men and women will submit still to starvation, torture and death rather than compromise with an ideal: it is doubtful citizenship, but it is a psychological problem to be faced and solved; it is best solved by preventing the martyr's high, tragic sense of desperation and by facilitating the methods of constitutional redress. Direct action is a final protest when the ways of constitutionalism are blocked; in Russia, in Ireland, in Egypt and India, the man with a grievance has been driven back on the bomb remedy. England dislikes sporadic violence as much

as general revolution: bombs are unlikely to be thrown in England, but the political strike will take their place as an alternative to the methods of representative government unless these methods can be made more sensitive to opinion. First the mode of election must be so changed that a minority candidate no longer slips into parliament over the struggling forms of his majority rivals; then the life of parliament must be so shortened that a member can be called to more frequent account; and lastly the constituency must have power to demand of its member that he submit himself for reelection when he is acting against its wishes. The representative must, in other words, become more and more the deputy. Such a development would have brought consternation to the heart of Edmund Burke; but it is the only alternative, in a press-ridden, publicity-ruled state, to direct action.

These are the mechanics of politics, the fundamentals governing the relations of ruler and ruled in all states at all times. Politics—in the sense of a conflict between parties organised in obedience to common principles and in pursuit of common aims—have lately been shelved. Now—as always—the king's government must be carried on; now—for the first time—it must be carried on by the king's present ministers. To secure that consummation, the unbending partisans of other days have sunk their differences: Mr. Lloyd George and Lord Curzon, Mr. Churchill and Lord Birkenhead, Mr. Montagu and Mr. Balfour work side by side; though liberal and conservative stalwarts retain enough of the old spirit to assure their constituents that they would resign if a sacrilegious finger were laid on their cardinal principles, by luck, contrivance or the requirements of

the moment Mr. Lloyd George has been able to avoid such controversial legislation as might split his ministry; and, where legislation threatened to become controversial, as in the latest home rule bill, the greatest living conciliator found a means of accommodating minor differences until a united cabinet recognised the absurdity of resigning office.

Though every government falls more or less unexpectedly, there is no reason why the present one should not continue until its leaders judge the moment to be ripe for an election. A ministry is upset by opposition within the House or outside; the coalition has no organised opposition to fear beyond the "wee free" liberals, who are numerically unimportant, and the labour party, which is not yet ready to take control. Coalition liberals and coalition conservatives have at least one foot firmly planted in the promised land; before they try to plant the second foot, they have to remember Aesop's fable of the dog that snapped at the reflection of his own piece of meat. Outside the House there is plenty of criticism, plenty of opposition; but, though a little of the criticism becomes fruitful through the urgency of the press, there is no visible alternative government, no one wants a general election, and the public is bored with politics. The warning which Charles II gave to his ambitious brother might be quoted by any minister to any critic who wished to supplant him.

Something as great as the war in its comprehensive, intimate attack on every member of the community will be required to reawaken general interest in politics: when Great Britain is even nearer bankruptcy and starvation, when the United States refuse her credit, when the world shortage of food affects the stomachs of the

world and the hungry, maddened hordes of central and eastern Europe break raveningly forth, it may be remembered that the misrule of the present government has an exact parallel, on a smaller scale, in the misrule of Louis XVI's ministers before the French revolution.

IV

On the eve of the 1918 election the prime minister expressed his political ideal in the formula that England had to be made a home fit for heroes. How far he has realised this ideal in the years during which he has ruled the House of Commons without opposition is a question which the heroes themselves are best qualified to answer; but, exalted as was his vision, some may still feel that, since England contains men and women of most unheroic stature and is but a part of the inhabited world, his formula was inadequate. The young men of the generation which this book has attempted to describe were, from the first awakening of their intelligence, exercised over the function of government and divided over its aim by the political philosophy which they hammered out for themselves in reading and discussion. From different angles and by different paths they reached agreement on the postulate that, before all else, every man should have secured to him the minimum of essentials. He could not claim food, air and warmth of natural "right", for in organised society a man enjoys only those rights which his fellow-men allow him; but the communists accorded them as a payment on account, and the individualists as an insurance against revolution. Those who fought shy of party labels and regarded

themselves as having been born fortuitously and without consultation into a world from which there was no escape but by death felt that they had every inducement to live, by mutual consideration, on the best possible terms with their fellows and that life would be intolerable if a neighbour rifled their pockets as they slept or broke their heads if they snored. Those who gloried in the name of liberals and believed that the end of life was the attainment of beauty included in their minimum the claim that each man should have secured to him the chance of making his own life beautiful. With generosity not yet tarnished by experience and with hatred of injustice not yet tempered by custom, these young men felt that they could not be wholly comfortable while others were uncomfortable: the cries of the suffering might banish sleep, their desperation might threaten security; if they obtruded it, as they were so tastelessly prone to do, their misery might disquiet an over-active conscience. Policy joined hands with humanity in favour of giving every one his minimum of essentials.

It had not been given when the war put an end to dreaming. It has not been given yet. It will not be fully given until a man is secure from disease and premature death; from pain, hunger, thirst and cold; from spiritual and intellectual fear; from terror of his fellow-man; from the educational inequality that sets him at a disadvantage with others; from the grievance that comes of a blow struck to his racial or religious sentiment. Twenty years ago, before they discovered the limitations of official politics, young liberals found from the contemplation of those ideals a vocation: they believed in equality of opportunity and swore by better housing, better feeding, better education; they sympa-

thised with the aspirations of nationality half a generation before these were discovered and forgotten by the rest of England; they were disturbed by the thought that men were flogged to death in the Belgian Congo or massacred in Armenia; and, maybe, they wearied the complacent with statistics of all those who in a single year and in the richest country in the world died of cancer and consumption or rotted away with syphilis. The verminous, rickety child seemed no less a blot on civilisation than the short-lived prostitute who—they were assured—was irreclaimable, "because that sort of thing always *has* gone on; it's the oldest profession in the world; and, of course, it *is* a safety-valve. . . ."

Twenty years of work and travel, twenty years of mingling with average, sensual men and women, twenty years' experience of inertia may have cured young liberals of their optimism, but it should have strengthened their faith. By now they have probably seen much of what, before, was made known to them only from books: they have walked through factories and seen girls turned into machines by the monotonous repetition of one part of one process; they have looked, over the side of a liner, at straining, black, half-naked men who have already been turned into the semblance of shuffling, debased animals by the monotony of carrying coal; they are assured, perhaps, that industrial conditions are better in England than anywhere else, but they still wonder what life and what vision of beauty are possible to these slaves of the work-room and of the coal-lighter, who are not the less slaves because they enjoy freedom to move from one master to another. Sheltered indeed must be the life of any who have not found, in twenty years, a

daily vent for the compassion which is the living breath of liberalism.

The communist who seeks to abolish private property has more chance of success than the impatient reformer who tries to sweep away all the ugliness of modern life by breaking the mechanism on which modern life with its ugliness and its beauty depends. It is too late to make an end of industrialism; and man was harder used and more brutalised before the advent of machinery than ever since. His lot is improving daily; and all that the reformer can reasonably ask is that the rate of improvement shall be accelerated until the employer of labour no longer imposes on his work-people conditions that he would himself refuse. In war, a British officer does not order his men into an action which he is himself afraid to undertake; at the end of a march, he does not think of his own needs until he has seen that his men have their food. There is something perilously like shirking in the attitude of an employer who expects men and women to undertake hardships from which he stands aloof; and, directly or indirectly, all are employers.

The mission of liberalism will not be fulfilled until it has achieved a form of civilisation whereof no part can inspire misgiving or shame. Every country has its dark places; the inhabitants of every country turn a blind eye to them until the upheaval of war, the outbreak of revolution or the spread of a new faith throws a challenge to every social institution and demands that it shall justify itself. When more than five million men voluntarily risked their lives in defence of one system against another, their decision was less a clean-cut choice than a blend of herd-instinct, collective hypnotism and that irrational feeling for associations which is called patriot-

ism; the decision once taken, they committed themselves to a struggle in which one order of civilisation would probably maintain itself and another would probably be overthrown. If they preserved that which was less good and destroyed that which was more good, they sinned against the light; if they preserved that which was more good, they were still obliged to prove it so much the better that no sacrifice was too great for it; and, if in their scrutiny they discovered blemishes, they were bound to remove them for fear the enemy would say that they had sacrificed themselves for something that was not worth their lives. During the war, of course, every one was too busy to hunt for blemishes and to remove them.

After the war every one is too busy; and those who once called themselves liberals have lost interest in everything but the cost of living, though the youngest of them can recall the days when the present prime minister's voice throbbed with emotion in describing the misery of the poor and in championing the outcasts of civilisation, wherever they were to be found.

It is more than time for the young liberals of twenty years ago to recognise that the liberal faith has lost its prophets and that the prophets have lost their liberal faith.

CHAPTER XIV

A MEMORY RETOUCHED

The nineteenth wave of the ages rolls
    Now deathward since thy death and birth.
Hast thou fed full men's starved-out souls?
    Hast thou brought freedom upon earth?
Or are there less oppressions done
In this wild world under the sun?

Nay, if indeed thou be not dead,
    Before thy terrene shrine be shaken,
Look down, turn usward, bow thine head;
    O thou that wast of God forsaken,
Look on thine household here, and see
Those that have not forsaken thee.

A. C. SWINBURNE: *Before a Crucifix.*

I

NEARLY twelve months after the treaty of peace with Germany had been signed, a few of the men who had gone down from Oxford ten or twelve years before met again at their annual college gaudy. It may be not superfluous to explain that all masters of arts who have kept their names on the books are invited in rotation, in the second half of June, to the commemoration ceremony, to dinner in hall, to a service next day and to breakfast in hall. From 1914 to 1918 the gaudies were discontinued; and 1920 provided the first occasion on which the men who had taken their M.A. degrees in the years immediately prior to the war received an invitation.

From the moment that they clambered into their hansoms, men who had not seen one another for ten years lapsed into a world which they had known as undergraduates in the last days of King Edward's reign. They had come together from India and Africa: clergymen, civil servants and officials of the Woods and Forests; with or without lasting injury, they had survived the war on one of its many fronts; some had grown rich, some had married and begotten children; some had remained as materially unchanged as they were unchanged in appearance; and, after a longer or shorter Odyssey of adventure, all were now settled to their work in life. Automatically they disinterred forgotten nicknames, and the first of all seemed to cast a spell upon them and to revive the atmosphere of the last night of their last term. The awnings and supper-tent lingered on as a reminder of Commemoration; ornate young men hurried through Tom Quad to the last ball of the week, leaden-footed young men limped to the bathrooms next day as their seniors made ready for prayers in the Cathedral.

Ten years before, a world to which their schools and universities were but a window lay before a disintegrating Oxford generation; and on its youth and enthusiasm, in an age which aspired to keep soul and body in hard condition, depended the mark that each member made in it. Half unconsciously, the young men of that epoch were reacting to that epoch's literary fervour of humanity and rational order: Galsworthy was teaching them that life should be gentle, Wells that it should be tidy, Shaw that it should be ascetic. That was the open noon of their idealism; those seemed the brave days for men of democratic faith.

In little more than the hundred years which ended with Queen Victoria's death an humane spirit of liberalism, not confined to a single country, had forbidden torture and abolished slavery; it had achieved political emancipation and religious toleration; in making the whole of a community responsible for each part, it was slowly inculcating an idea of fraternity; and, in asserting public right between nations, it was beginning to merge in that universal spirit which at intervals of many centuries shines through the world and teaches men to regard mankind as one whole: the constant spirit of Buddha, of Christ and of Tolstoi, the transitory half-understood dream of Alexander and of Napoleon. The trend of history seemed, in those days, to be a term interchangeable with the progress of liberalism; whatever stood in its way seemed destined to fight a losing battle; and the hope of the future was rooted in the record of the past. Every difficulty that for a moment seemed insuperable was matched by some old and seemingly insuperable difficulty which had been overcome: if old age, lazy and without vision, predicted that there must always be violence and injustice, youth could retort that injustice and violence were diminishing daily; if war continued, duelling in England had at least been abolished; if the modern sportsman fired broadsides into a cloud of driven birds, he was at least denied, and perhaps disinclined for, the pleasures of cock-fighting. Life, until 1914, was sacred; and the conditions under which life was carried on were becoming no less important than life itself.

The young liberals of those days, taught to feel that every human being must have a chance, through freedom, of attaining happiness, believed in their cause and

in their leaders; through the pitched battles of the next four years their faith was undimmed. More than this dumb allegiance it was not yet easy for them to give: still little more than boys, most of them had careers to make before they could participate actively in politics. Later, as a few of them were ready to take their place in the line, a more urgent war burst upon them; democracy at home had to be left to take care of itself, though in August 1914 they hoped and expected their local democracy would be caught up in a greater democracy; they believed then that "a war to end war" would prepare the way for ultimate human brotherhood.

Was it so fantastic a dream? In 1914 less than one hundred and seventy years had passed since the last civil war in which Englishmen fought against Englishmen on British soil; now England was consolidated and uniform. Might there not soon be a time when Europe, disarmed and controlled by an international police, would be so far uniform and consolidated that war between any of its component states would be no less unthinkable than war in England between Lancashire and Cornwall? Until Ireland was driven to anarchy, the common conscience of Great Britain refused to tolerate disorder and free shooting; might there not be a time when the common conscience of Europe refused to tolerate periodical massacres? In 1914, though perforce their grip slackened on the reforms nearer at hand, the souls of the young men were touched for a moment by the universal spirit.

For the survivors who paced the quadrangles after dinner, peering at the familiar staircases and glancing up at the silent windows, every corner of the college was haunted by some one who would never see Oxford again.

In 1910 very few believed that a European war was necessary; very many still believe that even by 1910 a different and more honest diplomacy could have averted it. In 1914, when war broke out, it was fancied that those who were offering their lives would be rewarded everlasting freedom from the fear of another war; could that still be fancied in 1920? It was felt and said, too, that, as these men were venturing all for one corner of the earth, they—if they came back—or their survivors should find it so swept and garnished that they would know they had ventured to good purpose. Oxford is still the kingdom of youth, and idealism still flourishes in its shelter; but, when the gathering speed of the London train cut short the last glimpse of Tom Tower and of the cathedral spire, it was not easy to feel that the sweeping and garnishing were complete.

II

"Whoever attempts to forecast the course systems of government will take," wrote Lord Bryce in *Modern Democracies,* "must . . . begin from the two propositions that the only thing we know about the Future is that it will differ from the Past, and, that the only data we have for conjecturing what the Future may possibly bring with it are drawn from observations of the Past, or, in other words, from that study of the tendencies of human nature which gives ground for expecting from men certain kinds of action in certain states of fact. We cannot refrain from conjecture. Yet to realise how vain conjectures are, let us imagine ourselves to be in the place of those who only three or four generations

ago failed to forecast what the next following generation would see. Let us suppose Burke, Johnson, and Gibbon sitting together at a dinner of The Club in 1769, the year when Napoleon and Wellington were born, and the talk falling on the politics of the European Continent. Did they have any presage of the future? The causes whence the American Revolution and the French Revolution were to spring, and which would break the sleep of the people in Germany and Italy, might, one would think, have already been discerned by three such penetrating observers, but the only remarks most of us recall as made then and for some years afterwards to note symptoms of coming dangers were made by a French traveller, who said that the extinction of French power in Canada had weakened the tie between the American colonies and Great Britain, and by an English traveller who saw signs of rottenness in the French Monarchy. Men stood on the edge of stupendous changes, not discerning the causes that were already in embryo beneath their feet, like seeds hidden under the snow of winter, which will shoot up under the April sunlight. How much more difficult has it now become to diagnose the symptoms of an age in which the interplay of economic forces, intellectual forces, moral and religious forces is more complex than ever heretofore, incomparably more complex than it had seemed to be before discovery had gone far in the spheres of chemistry, physics, and biology, before education had been diffused through all classes, before every part of the world had been drawn into relations with every other part so close that what affects one must affect the rest."

In ten years the men who hoped to beautify the world through the agency of politics had learned something of

parliament and of its limitations; it is not the perfect instrument for a social reformation or a spiritual revival; such vain imaginings revealed the reformers' folly or at least their youth, but they were misled by the resonant beatitudes of public speeches. Parliament and the whole machine of government are, by their remoteness from the public life of the nation, always a little loftier in temper than the basest elements of the population: the House of Commons may be blind, greedy, vindictive or persecuting, but at such moments it is never so persecuting or vindictive, so greedy or blind as an incensed mob would like it to be. On the other hand, parliament and the whole machine of government never, in their most exalted moments, attain such a nobility of soul as the mob outside achieves in its disinterested moods. From the first day of war to the last and for all their lapses into panic and madness, the uninstructed silent masses were prompt in every crisis with more patience and fortitude, more philosophy and more capacity for sacrifice than parliament knew how to use. It is not through the House of Commons that England will be made a home for heroes.

"We had no conception of the quality of politics," wrote Wells of one character then aged fifteen, "nor how 'interests' came into such affairs; we believed men were swayed by purely intellectual convictions and were either right or wrong, honest or dishonest (in which case they deserved to be shot), good or bad. We knew nothing of mental inertia, and could imagine the opinion of a whole nation changed by one lucid and convincing exposition. . . . We rebuilt London by Act of Parliament, and once in a mood of hygienic enterprise we transferred its population *en masse* to the North Downs

by an order of the Local Government Board. We thought nothing of throwing religious organisations out of employment or superseding all the newspapers by freely distributed bulletins. We could contemplate the possibility of laws abolishing whole classes; we were equal to such a dream as the peaceful and orderly proclamation of Communism from the steps of St. Paul's Cathedral, after the passing of a simply worded bill,—a close and not unnaturally an exciting division carrying the third reading. . . . We were not fools; it was simply that as yet we had gathered no experience at all of the limits and powers of legislation and conscious collective intention. . . ."

At one- or two-and-twenty the "mental inertia" of their conservative opponents had discouraged the reformers from thinking that the more drastic and dramatic methods of the French Revolution could be applied to British legislation in 1910; of the entire efficacy of legislation no doubt was entertained. Everything, it was believed (and the liberal majority of 1906 believed it too), could be done by means of a simply worded bill; all that a reformer needed was those sure voters who would carry the third reading after "a close and not unnaturally an exciting division"; and they were to be found in Scotland and Wales, in the north of England and every other liberal stronghold not yet seduced by factious, independent labour.

In London, it was soon discovered, there was no help to be expected save in the poor fringe of Camberwell and Hornsey, Stratford and Battersea; the liberal oratory of the period taught that dukes and slum-landlords were identical; and the young liberal was convinced in those days that the London he knew was ve-

hemently opposed to all amelioration of social conditions. If, later, he found that the most tory element in society had no greater liking than he for dirt, disease, crime, misery and hunger, he found, too, that the world in which his lot was cast for the next ten years was too busily engaged to spare anything but mental inertia for social reform. Its members displayed no ill-will; they subscribed hundreds of thousands every year to charity, they worked like slaves for the objects in which their interest had been aroused; but they did not see and they would not be made to see that Europe was an extension of England, that England was an extension of the village at their lodge-gates and that they were acquiescing in conditions of want and suffering, vice and crime which for very shame they would not allow among their own tenants.

In the course of those ten years young liberals often wondered what daily spur could be applied to imaginations and consciences which are active enough when once the spur has been applied. The work done for the relief of suffering is immense; the sums subscribed to charity are enormous; and yet by any standard they are insufficient. For want of a better postulate the reformers were agreed that it was incumbent on the state for every man and woman to be secured at least the minimum of essentials; in the search for a first principle of private conduct they would not have refused the criterion whether an act would increase or decrease, in any form or any degree, the world's total of unhappiness. To an agnostic, the value of Christian ethics lay less in the protection which they secured to the weak than in the chivalry which they demanded of the strong; and, if the mentally inert began with a test even so rudimentary as

this, they might progress to a frame of mind in which a man would be pulled up short by the fear, that, whatever the gain to others, his act would cause pain to a single living creature.

Pain of heart, pain of mind and pain of body are within the experience of all; the desire to escape it is older and stronger even than the desire to attain pleasure. And directly or indirectly, by implication, or expression, the most generous and humane men and women are daily adding to the world's suffering or are consenting to leave it unreduced. If the war could not inspire a consecration of life and a crusade for the extirpation of pain, what other spur can avail to rouse this somnolent collective conscience? Certain streets in every great city are thronged at certain hours with the women whom patronage calls "unfortunate" and superiority dubs "fallen"; the benevolent societies which exist to "reclaim" them succeed as well as a gardener who tries to give back its lost bloom to a rose. In misery of soul and suffering of body, every prostitute adds to the world's total of pain; but no woman can become a prostitute without the help of a man.

Here is a fate from which every man would save his mother, his sister and his daughter; to a slumbering conscience, other men's sisters and daughters do not matter.

III

In the last ten years, all those who find in mental inertia the chief obstacle to progress have been forced to enquire what does matter to the men and women whom they have been meeting. With comparatively few ex-

ceptions these people are temperate, kindly and faithful within conventional limits; they are as honourable and veracious as they are expected to be; almost without exception they are physically courageous, though they have little moral and less intellectual courage; they have a sluggish pride and hardly any dignity; they have great energy and resource, versatility and endurance; many have charm, most have ability and some have brilliance. A feudal aristocracy leavened by commerce has produced a society of men and women whom an alien may, with admiring detachment, consider the finest raw material for any human enterprise in any part of the world. No nation scored as high a total in as many different tests during the war. Before 1914, indeed, it seemed as if this incomparable human material was running to waste; since 1919 it seems to be running to waste again. The war shewed that in an emergency there was no less available supply of courage and endurance, of self-sacrifice and ability than ever before; these qualities are still there if any knew how to rouse them; but it seems that, though the English will always train for a race, they will not at other times keep themselves in even moderately good condition.

In the reaction from the war nothing seems to matter. The *argot* of London varies from week to week, like the style of dressing and dancing; but the atmosphere is the same, the restlessness is the same, the mad striving after effect is the same, the want of purpose is the same; and it may be doubted whether the money and energy demanded of such a life are justified by the tepid, flat pleasure which they purchase. In ten years London has become steadily and uncaringly more greedy and vulgar. Breeding is a memory of childhood; manners

grew blunt and were discarded during the years between the South African war and 1914; happiness has been lost to view in the hunt for distraction; and success is measured, arithmetically, by invitations.

"Queer place," Mr. Jingle said of Rochester. "Dock-yard people of upper rank don't know Dock-yard people of lower rank—Dock-yard people of lower rank don't know small gentry—small gentry don't know tradespeople—Commissioner don't know anybody."

London, it has been suggested, is less exclusive; and the only person who is in serious danger of not being received is the man who is detected cheating at cards. For all this facile accessibility, however, the tradespeople cannot expect to visit the small gentry without effort and assiduity. Before the war, since the war and despite the harrowing preoccupation with war's intensest crisis, a busy army of soft-voiced, watchful women have plied their unflagging trade of "getting to know people"; in wealth or in rank, in charm or in notoriety, in a combination of all or any, there is always some one to be found on a slightly higher plane, there is always one greater eminence from which exclusion is synonymous with disgrace: to cross the threshold they will fawn on those whom they despise and accept favours from those whom they detest. Among men the vice is confined to the very young, the mean, the vain and the insufficient; women are afflicted more widely and deeply, for they feel their value depreciated when an invitation passes them by. In the words of 'Algernon Moncrieff,' "Nothing annoys people so much as not receiving invitations."

IV

A few of the passing generation have retained their vision; many more have acquired a new vision from the heart-searching of war. The conscious striving after beauty and the gift of laughter alone differentiate man from the beasts; and to these few the attainment of beauty still matters here and elsewhere. London is still the greatest city of the world; it is no less true than in Dr. Johnson's day that, when a man is tired of London, he is tired of life; but it is difficult for any one who has lived for thirty years in its midst to look patiently on while the lessons of the war are forgotten and the debt owing to all who died in the war is repudiated. This lapse into futility is, perhaps, only a temporary reaction from the war; no man, thinking otherwise, would want to go on living, for in little more than thirty years the generation of which the time has now come to take leave has lost the greater part of those things which it valued. For a few, their country has been handed over to the blind violence and madness of anarchy; for more, their political idols have been flung on their faces; for all, their relations and friends have died in scores. The world of the survivors, like that corner of it in which they assembled at Oxford, is peopled with shades; the mood of the survivors is that of H. W. Garrod, when he wrote his *Intruders.*

"One day, I knew, it had to be:
Sooner or later I must see
Another race of men invade
Rooms which the men I knew had made,
With books, with pictures on the wall,
With pipes and caps, with bat or ball,

Obscurely individual.
I hate your steps upon the stair,
Your vacant voices on the air . . .
I hate your chatter overhead.
And your jests that fall like lead
Where only golden things were said
By the men that are dead, the men that are dead."

It is not a mood of resignation or acquiescence, but of resolution, hope and preparation to pay a debt and to take up, with hands howsoever much enfeebled and reduced, the task left unfinished "by the men that are dead." "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church"; and, unless that seed bring forth a spirit of peace abroad and of community at home, the blood will have been spilled to no purpose. The survivors of this decimated generation have to resist, to control or to convert the languid fatalists who would drift helplessly and hopelessly into revolution or into another war; they have to subdue and to convince the anarchist of Hyde Park and of Park Lane, to drive "blood-sucker" from the lips of the one and "Bolshevist" from the lips of the other, to mitigate the credulity alike of those who find Russian gold in the pocket of every opponent and of those who scent in all opposition a plot for enslaving the proletariat. In a country that has endured, bleeding but alive, after four years and three months of fighting, there must be no talk of class-wars: and it must be realised that the miscreant who bases political salvation on the lamp-posts of Whitehall is own brother to the miscreant who would win economic peace by shooting strike-leaders. If the war has not made of the English, at least, a united people, the task lies ready to the hand of those liberals who have survived it; if they lack a leader, it is only for a moment.

One movement is ended. An *intermezzo* is playing, perhaps is already drawing to a close. Soon the new movement will begin.

"This world has been harsh and strange;
Something is wrong: there needeth a change.
But what, or where? at the last or first?
In one point only we sinned, at worst.
The Lord will have mercy on Jacob yet,
And again in his border see Israel set.
When Judah beholds Jerusalem,
The stranger-seed shall be joined to them.
To Jacob's House shall the Gentiles cleave,
So the Prophet saith and his sons believe.
Ay, the children of the chosen race
Shall carry and bring them to their place:
In the land of the Lord shall lead the same,
Bondsmen and handmaids. . . ."

THE END

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